# What We Become

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# What We Become

by KoolJack1

Summary

It's many years later when Will sees Hannibal Lecter again in Jack Crawford's office with the title of Doctor attached to his name. Against all odds, they are brought together again. Calm, cool, and collected with no memory of Will being the one who knows the unspeakable things that were done to him; no indications of the orphanage or the abused child he was is evident on him.
Will doesn't know how he managed to overcome as he did, or did he?

It's a long story to the truth.

Sequel to Silence
Follows the season 1 timeline with alterations to fit the story line of Silence, plus scenes I wish were in the show.

Notes

Direct sequel to Silence and continues the AU that Hannibal and Will first met in the orphanage in Hannibal Rising. It is recommended to read that fic first in order to understand this one.
Silence can be found here http://archiveofourown.org/works/980899/chapters/1931406

This was requested a lot, I do hope I come through as much as you all wanted.

# Apéritif: Part One

He doesn't want to be involved with Jack Crawford and his serial killer chases, he'd given up on his dreams of the FBI so long ago. Will isn't content, but he's more than comfortable teaching people who will go for the job he could never get. He's content with his job and his little house and his dogs that love him more than any person ever did.

But when Crawford comes to him and starts the talk about poor dead girls, how could he say no when he could stop it? He swore to himself he'd just help point them in the right direction, then he'd return to his classroom and his dogs and his fishing lures.

That's why he doesn't understand why he goes to Crawford's office when he calls, claiming to have another consultant he'd like Will to collaborate with. He can't understand why he pats his dogs goodbye and goes.

It's awkward when he tilts his head forward to slide his glasses slightly lower before tapping on the door to alert the two men of his presence. They both turn to look at him, and Will's hands slide into his pockets.

It's disgusting, the act Jack puts on for the guest. Coming over and clasping Will on the shoulder as if they'd been friends forever. Will nearly shies away from the hand, but it's firmly on his back and pushing him further into the room. Will peeks at the taller man who takes a few steps closer, not looking higher than his thin lips for fear that their eyes will meet.

Sharp dressed. Thin. Professional.

"This is Will Graham. Will, this is Dr. Hannibal Lecter. I've called him in on Dr. Alana Bloom's recommendation, he's going to help us establish a profile." Will swears time freezes, and he has to remind himself to move to shake the other man's hand when he extends it.

His eyes are locked on Lecter's chin, his heart thudding uncomfortably in his chest. "Hello, Mr. Graham. I've heard many good things." The voice has his hair standing up, and he blinks at the taller man in shock. Gone is the terrified voice of a child having a nightmare, and gone is the silent, blank expression a younger Hannibal once wore. It's as if he never existed at all.

Silence covers the room and Will remembers it's his turn to speak. "Will, please call me Will." The thin lips pull up into a small smile.

"Of course, Will it is." The voice has his skin crawling; so normal and unaffected. Will wants to hear him talk forever.

Another silence, and Will cant focus enough to think about social obligations when his mind is turning the name Hannibal Lecter around over and over again in his mind.

Swans. Ponds. Bruises.

"Have a seat, Will," Crawford urges him gently, and Will blinks and realized both men had already sat. He feels Hannibal's eyes follow him as he takes the seat to his right, wishing the chair was further away from him. Will inhales deeply, and he can feel that this man before him is his long lost friend, the boy that crossed his mind on more occasions than he should.

He can feel a smaller hand clutching at his shirt in panic.

Doctor Hannibal Lecter.

He glances at Hannibal out of the corner of his eye, wondering idly if he feels the same connection. Calm and gathered, Will frowns slightly. Not one indication of recognition, not even a slight awareness.

Maybe he completely blocked the memories out, Will couldn't say he blamed him. He'd done well for himself. Well dressed in fancy clothes, obviously some sort of money. He survived wherever he ran off to, and found his way to the states. Graduated some form of schooling somewhere, earned himself a title and respect and a reputation. Will couldn't deny he was impressed.

"Will?" Crawford is frowning at him, and Hannibal is eyeing him curiously. His face flushes hotly and he nods to indicate he's listening, unaware anyone ad spoken to him.

"Tell me then, how many confessions?" Will nearly sighs with relief that Lecter moves the spotlight from him, and once again Jack is all business.

"Twelve dozen last time I checked. None of them knew details. Until this morning. Then everyone knew details. Some genius in Duluth PD took a picture of Elise Nichols' body with their phone and shared it with a few close friends. Freddie Lounds ran it on Tattlecrime.com." Will makes a face, swallowing the thickness in his mouth.

"Tasteless," it slips past his lips before he can think better of it, flinching when all eyes turn back to him. Hannibal looks at him, and Will studies the desk top instead. He's afraid looking into his eyes will make Hannibal remember him, he's afraid it will make the fact that against all odds they're once again sitting side by side real. He isn't even sure Hannibal doesn't remember him, he isn't sure he wants him to remember him.

"Do you have trouble with taste?" His voice is dark and rich, heavy with an accent. Will wonders how long it was before they met Hannibal stopped speaking, and when he decided it was time to start again. Looking back on the blurry memories as Will often did, he entertained the theory that Hannibal had some sort of brain damage from an injury. It was a way for him to pretend it wasn't trauma and fear keeping him mute and shaky. Looking and listening to him now disproved the theory, and he realized he never considered the idea that Hannibal had grown up and...done something with his life.

He's looking at him with clear, judgement free eyes, and he remembers he's supposed to answer, "My thoughts are often not tasty."

"Nor mine. Not effective barriers," he says conversationally. Will's eyes flash up to his, attempting to pick apart double meanings in his words.

"I build forts," he says, looking away again.

"Associations come quickly," Will can't help but think he's speaking from experience.

"So do forts," Hannibal himself would have had to build a fort so high around himself in order to be sitting before him as he was right now.

"Not fond of eye contact, are you?" It's a simple observation, there's no malice in the words. Still it causes a flare of anger in his chest.

It annoys him, the way the man is looking at him curiously as if he hadn't clung to Will in the throws of a nightmare of after God knows what was done to him. As if he hadn't kissed him and touched him before. Making observations about his social skills as if last time they saw one another Hannibal was capable of any social interaction. Acting as if he's prim and proper with no secrets for his eyes to hide. He's annoyed that the troubled boy he met before is just like everyone else, he's annoyed that he turned out to be a psychiatrist.

"Eyes are distracting. You see too much. You don’t see enough. And it’s hard to focus when you’re thinking those whites are really white or they must have hepatitis, or is that a burst vein? So I try to avoid eyes whenever possible." Annoyance leaks in his voice, and he hopes Lecter takes a hint.

"I imagine what you see and learn touches everything else in your mind. Your values and decency are present yet shocked at your associations, appalled at your dreams. No forts in the bone arena of your skull for things you love." The words twist and pull at Will's insides, and he feels his stomach twist painfully. He wants out and away from Hannibal and Crawford, far away.

Actually he wants to be with Hannibal alone, and he wants to see if he remember, he wants him to remember and tell Will everything he couldn't back then. He also wants Hannibal to never remember they ever met. He certainly doesn't want him in his head.

"Who's profile are you working on?" He questions, and it comes out more defensive then he means it to. Lecter sits back in his seat and Will defiantly makes eye contact with him before turning to look at Jack. He forgot he was even there. "Who's profile is he working on?" Hannibal sighs next to him and Will wants to turn and raise a hand to see if Hannibal will still flinch. Guilt drips into him at the thought and he frowns.

"I’m sorry, Will. Observing is what we do. I can’t shut mine off any more than you can shut yours off." It's a genuine explanation, and Will doesn't want to hear it. He doesn't want Hannibal in his head, looking around as if he doesn't have anything in his own. As if Will had never been in his. He needs to leave.

"Please don’t psychoanalyze me. You won’t like me when I’m psychoanalyzed. Now if you’ll excuse me, I have to go give a lecture on psychoanalyzing." He doesn't look at Hannibal again, refusing to acknowledge him for fear that he will scream at him, or cry. He's being psychoanalyzed by someone who spent a large portion of their childhood mute and petrified. So instead he hurries from the room without looking back, wiping his sweaty hands on his pants as he goes. Hannibal Lecter was just trying to psychoanalyze him, the traumatized

child. The irony burns his throat, and he takes off his glasses and pinches the bridge of his nose. He shouldn't have come.

Will Graham. Hannibal chews the idea of him over in his mind. He's unforgivably rude and socially inept, and yet... Lecter wants to hear more. The rudeness is a defensive mechanism, designed to resist against constant assaults on his being. Will Graham had felt like a stranger in his own skin for a long time, constantly unhappy, that was apparent to him. The gift, the gift was something else. He wants to know more, he has to.

"Maybe we shouldn’t poke him like that doctor. Maybe use a less direct approach," Crawford sighs, rubbing a hand down his face. As if Hannibal is interested in a psychological profile for the use of the FBI, as if he plans to do this just for him. It's a chance of a life time, one he won't pass up.

"What he has is pure empathy. And projection. He can assume your point of view, or mine -- and maybe some other points of view that scare him. It’s an uncomfortable gift, Jack. Perception’s a tool that’s pointed on both ends," he comments, no longer interested in Crawford. Will Graham is a specimen he needs to test. He needs to see this so called gift in action. He stares at the board displaying pictures of pretty girls, pretty girls who have lost their lives to a cannibal. A cannibal Will can see, and he wants to stand just close enough to watch him see this cannibal and understand. Of course he'll help, he'll help Will see.

"This cannibal you have him getting to know... I think I can help good Will see his face," he'll have him see his face, and get to know him in every sense of the word. He wants him to know and understand, and he wants to watch it happen. The first person in the world who can see and understand what he does from both ends.

Crawford is staring at him expectingly, "I really appreciate that, Dr. Lecter, I know I came out of no where and asked you to help us; thank you for clearing your busy schedule to help us." He smilies and nods his head politely, as if he'd pass up a chance to be on the inside of the FBI. And now he's been handed Will Graham like a gift, a chance for studying someone who's one of a kind. He has no interest in a professional relationship with someone like Crawford, and he's certainly not interested in his flattery.

"Of course, I do believe I can make Will understand I only wish to help," he says, smiling slightly at Crawford.

"I trust your opinion Doctor, thank you for this," Crawford looks at him with admiration and respect, the look disgusts him.

# Apéritif: Part Two

Seeing the young girl's body upon the stage head leaves Will feeling numb and disconnected, this isn't the world he was ready to be back in. And he certainly wasn't prepared to reenter that world with Hannibal Lecter.

Hannibal.

Will's having an out of body experience while he showers and changes for bed. He has no idea how much time has passed before he turns over and finds Elise in bed with him, as dead and cold as she was in the field. He stares helplessly, watching as the young girl floats above his bed. There's painful whimpering, and Will cringes at the thought that the girl is in pain. He shuffles towards her, reaching out. The whimpering isn't coming from her, or himself, and when he looks over the edge of the bed, there's a boy.

Elise's blood drips and splatters onto the boy's thin face, and he flinches back against the bed. His smaller fingers come up to smudge the blood on his cheek, and he whines, shaking his head and pressing the bloody fingers to his lips.

He reaches for him, his heart pounding when his fingers touch the unruly hair. "Hannibal," he whispers, and the boy presses his fingers into his mouth. Something huffs a breath and Will looks up to stare right into the eyes of a giant buck, or a stag. A beast with fur and feathers and intent eyes. Like the one in the field. Elise hovers just above it's overbearing antlers. The black and brown fur cover it, overgrown with feathers. He's beautiful, in his own way. Will just stares as the stag looks down at the boy on the ground and tilts his head, the tip of his antlers catching on Hannibal's shirt. Will swallows roughly and grabs the antler to get the animal's attention, "Don't hurt him," he whispers so quietly it's as if he hadn't spoken at all.

The stag looks at him again before lowering his head and muzzle to press his nose into Hannibal's neck. The boy doesn't flinch this time, instead he raises the bloody fingers and touches the large animal's cheek. The blood smears there too, and the stag huffs air at Hannibal. The child sighs and tilts his head back, letting the stag drag his tongue right alongside jugular vain.

He's in bed, alone. Alone in his house and covered in drying sweat when he opens his eyes. His stomach is unsettled, his mind drifting to images of a little Hannibal smeared with Elise's blood. And the stag... The stag rubbing his antlers on the little boy's chest.

Will shudders and presses the heals of his palms to his eye sockets, willing the image away. It had been a long time since he had a full fledged nightmare, and even longer since then that the dream had little Hannibal Lecter in it. That little boy isn't so little anymore.

Deciding he's done sleeping, since the sun is creeping in behind his blinds; he gets up and strips his soiled clothing and changes into new boxers and a t-shirt, stopping to rinse his face off before pushing his glasses back on his face. His dogs trot along beside him as he heads to the back door to let them out.

He hears someone step up on his wooden porch, followed by a steady knock. He turns to stare at the front door in disbelief, he couldn't remember the last time someone had come and knocked on his front door. The knock comes again, and he grabs his robe and heads to the front door. He doesn't even think to look who it is first before yanking the door open. He's expecting Jack, saying they're leaving early for Minnesota. He blinks at the intrusion of light, his eyes adjusting to see Hannibal Lecter standing on his porch. His stomach turns violently, obviously he isn't going to be able to avoid this man and pretend he never saw him.

Then he considers that maybe Hannibal does in fact know who he is, and was too professional to mention it in front of Jack. He wouldn't blame him. They stare at each other, and Will allows eye contact for the first time. Hannibal's eyes are calm and professionally friendly, contrasting the last time Will looked into his eyes. Will forgets once again that the man is waiting for him to speak. He can only imagine how he comes off to strangers.

"Good morning, Will. May I come in?" At least the man doesn't make him feel like a fool and call him out on his social ineptness. That's a psychiatrist for you.

He can't determine if Hannibal is here because they need to talk or if Jack sent him, "Where's Crawford?"

Lecter smiles kindly at him, Will can't look at his face anymore, " Deposed in court. The adventure will be yours and mine today," Will stares at the ground between them, his hands shaking slightly. He wonders if Hannibal can tell. "May I come in?" He winces and realizes how much of a fool he's making of himself, cursing his inability to handle something as simple as a vistor at his home. Hannibal doesn't seem uneasy or aggravated, just curious and kind. It annoys him.

He nods jerkily, turning and letting Lecter follow him in. Hannibal looks around the dark room, closing the door behind him. His eyes study Will as he rubs his fingers through his hair and sighs. A chance to study the man alone in his own home is too sweet to pass up, he licks his lips and joins Will at the table.

Will stares in disbelief as Hannibal sets down two containers and mugs, poring two cups of coffee from a thermos and peels the lids off the containers. He stares into the delicious smelling eggs, sausage, and vegetables, unable to force himself to move. He can't wrap his mind around that this is the same Hannibal he once knew, he can't even imagine how that abused child turned into this; a gathered, well respected, polite, educated, normal man while Will suffers from loneliness and isolation. How the tables have turned.

Hannibal observes Will's blank stare curiously, depositing his own breakfast onto a plate and sliding Will's closer to him. "I’m very careful about what I put into my body. Which means I end up preparing most meals myself. A little protein scramble to start the day. Some eggs, some sausage," he explains conversationally, willing Will to calm down and be at ease around him. He's impatient, he requires this man's trust now. He certainly isn't an impatient man, but his desire to earn this strange man's trust to take him apart and look inside is maddening.

Will doesn't look up, frowning down at the food in front of him. He decides then that Hannibal doesn't know who he is, and that he doesn't plan on informing him. The notion makes him angry, but of course Hannibal wouldn't think that a Will he knew all those years

ago would become him. Why would he want to remember someone who was part of the darkest times in his life now that he'd grown and moved into the light? He takes a bite, hesitating when the taste hits him. It's delicious, and for some reason that makes him more aggravated. "It's delicious, thank you," he says and evenly as he can manage.

When he glances up, Lecter is watching him carefully from across the table, "My pleasure." There's and uncomfortable gleam in his eye that Will can't manage. The silence carries on and Will tries to remember his table manners, forking small amounts into his mouth self consciously. "I would apologize for my analytical ambush but I know I will soon be apologizing again and you'll tire of that eventually so I have to consider using apologies sparingly." It's one of the most honest and genuine things Will's heard from anyone in so long, and it sets his teeth on edge. He puts his fork down, suddenly no longer hungry despite how delicious it is. At least Hannibal isn't going to pretend that he's here for any other reason besides to profile him, at least he won't pretend to be sorry.

"Just keep it professional," he says, a little more hostile than he intends. Hannibal doesn't waver, and he takes another mouthful of food himself. Will stares at him, imagining him much younger and refusing to eat.

"Or we could socialize like adults, God forbid we become friendly," he says easily, and Will huffs slightly. He has no right to sit here and say they could e come friendly, not after Hannibal left him to rot without so much as a warning, even if he doesn't remember; Will sure does. The irony is killing him, he nearly blurts out that they were already friendly, until Hannibal decided to run away and leave Will wondering if he survived the travel to wherever he was going. He wants to shake the man and ask him if he remembers the kisses and the swans and the bruises.

Friendly. Adult friends.

Hannibal the mute bruised child was easier for him.

"I don't find you that interesting," he says finally. Especially after he was such an interesting child that grew up to be a very boring adult.

Lecter smiled at him, "You will." Will turns to stare out the crack in the blinds, refusing to look at the mana across the table. "Agent Crawford tells me you have a knack for the monsters."

Will huffs, resisting rolling his eyes. Hannibal licks his lips again. "And we have a mutual friend, Alana Bloom. I called her, saying that you and I met. She wouldn't say much about you, but its apparent she's rather fond of you. Smitten, even. She worries for you, asked me to keep an eye on you."

Will cant help but turn his head and look at the man, who's regarding him with friendly eyes. Too friendly, as if calming a panicked animal. Will knows too well that Hannibal was the panicked animal at one point. Alana Bloom, he knows Alana. That flairs jealously in his chest for reasons he can't imagine, he knows her well enough to call her and talk. Will frowns slightly, realizing now that Hannibal has developed other relationships in his life. He's moved on. It sounds suspiciously like a conversation two men would have over a beer, talking about

the women interested in them. It opens a door for a more friendly conversation. Will shudders and decides not to take the bait.

"I don't think the Shrike killed that girl in the field," that attracts Hannibal's attention back to work, and he eats another mouthful, thinking it over.

"The devil is in the details. What didn't your Copy Cat do to the girl in the field? What gave it away?" There's a hint of excitement and enthusiasm in his voice now, he's interested. They share a common interest.

Will softens slightly, "Everything. It's like he had to show me a negative so I could see the positive. That crime scene was practically gift-wrapped." It's a comfortable conversation, it's in his realm of knowledge.

"The mathematics of human behavior. All those ugly variables. Some bad math with this shrike fellow. Are you reconstructing his fantasies? What kind of problems does he have?" Hannibal is smiling at him again, despite the conversation. Lecter leads the conversation to one he will be comfortable with, drawing him out of his shell and into a place he can talk about comfortably.

"He has a few," Will says, and Hannibal can hear the shift in his voice. He's more comfortable now.

"Ever have any problems, Will?" Hannibal says boldly, and Will looks up at him again. He can't help it, a smile breaks out on his face.

"No," and he chuckles, Hannibal does too. As if they're sharing some inside joke, Will can't help but think that they are doing exactly that. It should annoy Will, and if anyone else had said it, it would have pissed him off.

"Of course you don't. You and I are just alike. Problem free. Nothing about us to feel horrible about," Will rubs his face, willing the smile away. The obvious lie they both just told is so ironic it's almost believable, except Hannibal isn't aware that Will knows just how much he is lying. Will realizes they're bonding, Hannibal is so good at leading conversations and socializing that he's bonding with Will, the only man in the world that doesn't know how to bond with people. Hannibal is showing him just how easy it is. Will can't help but wonder if he was this smart the whole time, even back then. He can't help but wonder where he picked this all up from.
" I think Uncle Jack sees you as a fragile little tea-cup, the finest china used for only special guests," the conversation shifts again and Will inhales sharply, peeking up at Hannibal again, chuckling at the other man's smile.

"How do you see me?" He has to ask, he has to know. He has to hear what the man has to say.

"The mongoose I want under the house when the snake slither by," it's such a strange thing to say that Will is thrown off again, and his face blanks as he ponders the statement. They stare at each other seriously before Hannibal smiles slightly, "Finish your breakfast."

He feels the compulsion to obey, and he picks up the fork to pass more eggs into his mouth. He feels suddenly guilty for being rude and short before, for shutting the other man out. It isn't his fault he doesn't remember, perhaps Will just isn't worth remembering.

"So you know Alana Bloom," he adds, forking a sausage.

"I do, in fact I mentored her while she was in schooling," Lecter says, surprised Will decided to revisit that conversation.

"She's an impressive woman," Will adds, licking his lips.

"That she is, very smart and attentive. Do you have the pleasure of her company often?"

Will tries to keep the frown from his face at the thought that Hannibal knows Alana better than he does...and that Alana knows him better than he does. "Unfortunately not nearly enough."

"Perhaps you should ask her for her company more often then, she seemed more than interested," and the guy talk is back.

Will stuffs the rest of the food in his mouth quickly and stands suddenly, "It's best that her and I only share a...professional relationship. Just let me get dressed and then we can go," he says, ending the conversation and abruptly as it began.

Hannibal watches him go and stands to clean the dishes, scrapping the left overs into the dog bowls he sees on the floor in the corner. He inhales deeply, stifling the overwhelming curiosity and pull he feels towards this man. He needs to know why Will looks at him as if he's some sort of alien. There is no way he can see through him, it's too early. Yet the man just looks at him with this look, and Hannibal wants to consume it.

Will is back quickly, dressed in jeans and a horrid button down, Hannibal smiles politely and adjusts his sleeve, "Ready if you are," he mumbles. Seconds later a heard of dogs come running and stuff their nose into the bowl. Hannibal cringes and nods slightly, following Will outside into the cool air.

# Apéritif: Part Three

The ride is nearly silent, and Hannibal lets him have his time to consider. Will Graham isn't a man used to having someone come into their life so suddenly and fully, requesting entrance into his mind and his home. Small doses, he reminds himself. He has to tread carefully.

Their flight is an easy process, and Hannibal thumbs through a book he brought while Will rests his eyes, effectively demonstrating he doesn't wish to have more conversation. Hannibal lets him retreat into his shell.

He just sits idly and let's Will lead them without asking what the plan is or where they're going, even though he's beyond interested in seeing how Will will go about this. He was elated when Crawford informed him it would most likely be better if Hannibal and Will went alone, so he could get Will on his side. There's a rent a car for them, and Will drives as if he already knows where he's going.

He smiles to himself, enjoying the whole experience. Finally able to see what the FBI does, with someone like Will.

He's tense, he can't stop glancing over at Hannibal in the passenger seat. He's hyper aware of their closed space, holding his tongue to silence the urge to start spilling memories to Hannibal, to inform him. When Will glances over at Hannibal, he's smiling to himself; Will's lips twitch in return.

"What are you smiling about?" He asks, and his voice is teasing, all hostility gone.

Hannibal notices too, and the smile turns into more of a smirk, "Peeking behind the curtain. Curious how the FBI goes about its business when it isn’t kicking in doors." And peeking behind Will's curtain, watching him without any influence or pressure from someone like Jack Crawford, but he omits that.

Will sighs, "We're lucky we're not doing house to house interviews," Hannibal doesn't tell him that he would have been fine doing anything with Will, as long as he got to study him alone. "We found a little piece of metal in the clothes Elise Nichols had on. A shred from a pipe threader," he adds, remembering Hannibal doesn't know much about this. He looks over at the man, watching him brush a stray piece of hair from his face. It's lighter now, and his skin is tanner and aged. Will tries to morph the little boy in his head into the man before him. He wonders if Hannibal ever thinks of little Will, he wonders what he thought of him back then.

"Jack Crawford wants me to make sure you’re of sound mind and body... to look for metal pipethreaders?" It's a joke, and Will smiles despite himself. He won't hold Hannibal accountable for Jack asking him to study him. Of all people in the world, this is the man he'd let into his head, after all he'd already been in there this whole time. His heart softens more, and he feels a wall no one was ever allowed beyond crack slightly inside him.

"That's between you and Jack," he says honestly, and its his way of telling Lecter that he doesn't want to know about whatever it is Jack and him speak about. They're separate, their relationship.

Lecter doesn't comment further on that train of thought, too interested in why they're on this site of all the possibilities. Will is all business as he explains the process, leading the way inside with a confidence Hannibal is sure Will only demonstrates at work when he has to. He pays close attention to Will's every movement, the way Will's mind nearly visibly turns and connects dots. The girl in the office and Will exchange words, but Hannibal is too interested in watching Will flip through the files.

It's amazing, the way he picks Hobbs out of the stack as if he knew exactly who he was looking for. Will has to be his, he has to consume that beautiful mind of his and bend it to fit him. He can feel Will's vulnerability, it clings to him like a second skin. That's why he finds himself alone in the office, the phone in is hand.

A young girl answers, and it thrills him even more. Will was right, Hobbs did have a daughter. He can almost picture her in his head.

When he tells Hobbs simply that they know, the thrill that shoots through him is beautiful. He nearly salivates at the thought of watching this unfold, the unpredictability of it.

Will feels cold the whole ride to the Hobbs house, and Hannibal tries to act just the right amount of anxious and excited. Will worries he's dragging Hannibal into something he isn't ready for yet. Though the years of him being a little boy have long passed, Will can't anticipate what being involved in this will make him remember.

He doesn't say anything when he gets out of the car, hearing Hannibal get out after him. He acts the instant a dying, bloodied woman stumbles out onto the porch and takes her last gasping breaths. Numbness takes him over and in the back of his mind he's extremely aware that Hannibal is standing behind him, watching it unfold. He wants to turn around and look at him, but this is work and this is someone's life and the real world.

He shoots Hobbs just a second too late, his daughter is already bleeding on the floor. She's young and pretty, very much like all the other girls. Like he knew she'd look. He clings to her while she clings to her life. Wide, panicked eyes search his face, a plea to save her.

He's covered in blood, his hands too slick to get a grip on the wound. He's twitching with every painful breath she takes under his hand, his eyes darting between hers and her father's, life ebbing away from them both.

The sight of Will covered in blood is so delectable, he takes a moment to admire the scene and commit it to memory before remembering that a normal man wouldn't just stand there, especially since he's trained.

Will jumps when larger, more sturdy hands calmly push his away and take the place of stopping the bleeding. He looks up, choking for air. Hannibal is there, looking down at the bleeding girl calmly, and Will cant see any trace of that terrified little boy in him. It scares him.

"Call the ambulance, Will," he says evenly, and Will is still gasping when he digs out his phone, nearly dropping it. Hannibal admires the young girl in his hands and smiles. She could be useful to him, he can feel it in the warmth of the blood on his hands as it pours from her body. He holds tighter, deciding he won't let her bleed out.

The ambulance comes quickly, and everything is a flutter of commotion then. Abigail Hobbs will live, thanks to Hannibal Lecter. Will stays out of their way, fading into the background and watching as Lecter climbs into the back of the ambulance with the girl, never letting go of her hand.

Hannibal is aware of Will's eyes following his every movement, and he's careful to show concern and worry for the unconscious girl. It's strange that it comes rather naturally, the concern for her. He tried to save her life, and now it would be a failure for her to die. A failure on his part. A failure Will can not witness.

He speeds the whole way to the hospital, waiting before going into her room. He stops and washes the blood from himself, checking himself in the mirror. He doesn't know the person looking back at him. He checks with a nurse, she's unconscious. Part of him is happy about that, he wants to see her without her seeing him. He is the man that killed her father after all, he isn't ready to face her.

When he walks into her room, he freezes. The last thing he expects to find is Hannibal right by her side, still holding her hand. His head is tipped to the side, resting against his chest while he sleeps. His hair is flopped in his face, and he looks much younger. Not as young, of course, as Will remembers, but still younger. Undisturbed of nightmares, apparently he out grew those too. Will sits and watches them closely, the picture of innocence, Hannibal will be the hero to Abigail, he'll be the man that killed dad.

It leaves a foul taste in his mouth. Hannibal and him saved a life together.
He stares at the sleeping man, imagining his body thrashing in the holds of a nightmare. Will's much smaller hand over his mouth as he fights against him before accepting his fate and laying still. His cries turning to pained whines before he wakes up and melts back against Will.

Will clears his throat when the memories seem to clog it, and puts his head in his hands. "Are you alright?" The voice startles him and he sits up straight, staring at Lecter. He still looks tired, but he's sitting up now, his hand firm in Abigail's.

"Yes, just not how I planned my week going," it's an understatement.

"Agreed. It would seem we've both met some life changing people," his eyes are on Abigail, but Will can tell he's including their meeting as well.

"You'll be important to her, I killed dad," he says bitterly.

Lecter looks at him sympathetically, "I wouldn't have had a chance to save her had you not stopped her father from cutting the rest of the way."

Jack storms in then, and Will blinks and breaks away from the moment, standing up. Crawford eyes Abigail on the bed, then Lecter's hand. Will admires that he doesn't remove it. "I want her transferred somewhere closer when she's stable enough so we can keep an eye on her."

Will flinches at the cold tone of his voice, protective over the unconscious girl. He knows how Jack can be, and that's the last thing she needs. "I know of a place not too far from me where she can stay while all this is sorted out," Lecter says smoothly.

It's enough for Jack, "They think she'll be out for awhile, we should head back until then. There's still more girls to find. I'll arrange a transfer for her." Will only follows Crawford because he's uncomfortable, but he wishes to stay and look after Abigail, ensure she doesn't wake up alone even though she won't. Hannibal presses his hand to the girl's head, Will sees it from the corner of his eye.

He's careful not to be too close to Hannibal the whole way back to Quantico. Will takes his own car from the airport, slightly unnerved that Hannibal rides with Jack to the office, knowing they're speaking about him.

Lecter's car is at Will's and Will tries to contain the flair of happiness he feels when Hannibal gets in his car to ride to his house. "Well this has certainly been an experience, very exciting." Will doesn't respond, he just ponders Abigail and Hobbs and watching them both bleed to death. Almost bleed to death.

Then there's Hannibal and he's proof that bad things can happen to someone and they can still be okay. Maybe he can help Abigail be okay again, now that he's proven it can be done.

"Would you like to come in?" He asks without thinking when they arrive at his house. Part of him considers that now would be the time to talk to him about their past. This whole day showed him he wants this Hannibal to remember him. He wants to hear how he managed to transform from what he remembers to this man. He wants to hear what it was like, and he wants to know what role he played for him.

"It's rather late, I have to return to Baltimore. Thank you for the invitation though, I suspect we will be seeing each other soon." Will deflates and just nods, smiling politely before he goes inside. He stands just inside the door, listening to Hannibal back out and waits until he can't hear his car anymore before inhaling deeply. He lets the dogs out again while he fills their bowls and strips from his clothing. They eat noisily, and he crumples onto his bed and shuts his eyes.

He knows he won't be sleeping.

# Amuse-Bouche: Part One

When he sees Hobbs' antler room, just as he suspected it would look, he's cold to the bone. The chill expands painfully when Jack expresses his suspicion about Abigail Hobbs' involvement in the actions of her father. It rises bile in his throat, considering that the young girl he saved with Hannibal could somehow be involved. She's an innocent victim, a child. She has to be, it can't be any other way.

The cold settled in his chest is doubt that he refuses to acknowledge openly.

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Will wants to believe that his time with Hannibal will be limited, he really does. Especially time that they spend alone, he wants that to the smallest minimum. The nagging in the back of his mind tells him that isn't what he wants, but its what must be. He and Hannibal- it would be bad for both of them if their past came back. Probably worse for Hannibal, whose life has obviously moved on.

That doesn't make him any less distracted in the days following. Between the guilt over Hobbs, the worry for Abigail, and the constant reminder that Hannibal from his dreams and nightmares has reentered his life, he doesn't know how he doesn't have a slip of tongue. He is irritable though, even his classes can tell not to push it. Jack had Abigail moved closer, to where Hannibal suggested. He found himself spending more time there than might be appropriate, but the nagging urge wouldn't go away until he went.

His heart only softens slightly when his class ends and he turns to see Alana Bloom walking in. Hannibal's words rush over him and he feels butterflies flutter inappropriately in his chest. Smitten. She smiles at him slightly and he tries to come up with something to say, drawing a blank.

"Hi," his lips twitch into a smile of his own.

"How are you, Will?" Her voice is gentle and curious, professional for a psychiatrist, it puts out the fire of interest in him.

He tries to keep his disappointment to himself, "I have no idea." If only she knew everything he had to consider right now.

She glances around the room, her smiling pulling down, "I didn't want you to be ambushed." The slight waver in her voice catches is attention and he adjusts his glasses.

"This is an ambush?" Probably the only kind of ambush he wouldn't mind is if she was the one doing it.

She hesitates, "The ambush is later," he blinks at her, "immediately later, soon to now. When Jack arrives, consider yourself ambushed." Of course no such luck that she was the ambush. Jack appears next to her, frowning at her back and then at him.

"Here's Jack," and he knows the disappointment shows this time.

Jack ignores it, "How was class?"

Will tears his eyes away from Alana to busy himself, "They applauded, it was inappropriate."

Jack smiles half hearted, and Will knows its the closest he'd ever get to seeing one, "Well, the review board would beg to differ. You're up for a commendation. And they'd played active return to the field."

Will detects that Jack wants him to be excited, to jump at the offer to stick around and make his job easier. He inhales deeply, "The question is, do you want to go back to the field?" She says it gently, and Will knows she won't think less of him if he declines, he can tell she actually wants him to.

Jack huffs, "I want him back in the field, and I've told the board I'm recommending a psych eval." As if what he wants is all that matters, and Alana scowls deeply. Will feels like a child torn between two parents.

He stares at the ground, "Are we starting now?"

A confused silence covers them, and Will cant look up. Alana understands first and amends , "Oh, the session wouldn't be with me."

Will knows where this is going before Jack even speaks, and his heart clenches tightly. "Hannibal Lecter's a better fit. Your relationship isn't personal. But if you're more comfortable with Dr. Bloom-"

Will cuts him off, aggravated for no reason. "No, I'm not going to be comfortable with anybody inside my head." If only Jack knew he had it all backwards, Hannibal is most certainly not a better fit.

"You've never killed anyone before, Will. It's a deadly force encounter, it's a lot to digest." Her tone leaves a sour taste in his mouth.

"I used to work Homicide," he defends himself, determined not to have her see him as weak.

Jack crushes that determination, "The reason you currently used to work Homicide is because you didn't have the stomach for pulling the trigger. You just pulled the trigger ten times!"

The comment would embarrass Will further if the truth didn't just become apparent, "Wait, so a psych eval isn't a formality?" He hates the way his voice cracks, he hates how Alana is looking at him with eyes full of sympathy. He hates that she's in on this, and that Jack won't let him go. He hates that he'll have to face Hannibal again.

Jack snaps at him, "No, it’s so I can get some sleep at night. I asked you to get close to the Hobbs thing. I need to know you didn’t get too close. How many nights did you spend in Abigail Hobbs’ hospital room, Will?"

Accepting defeat, he looks away, "Therapy doesn't work on me," and he knows its a lost battle.

Jack groans, "Therapy doesn't work on you because you won't let it."

"And because I know all the tricks." And because his therapist was a man he'd watched crumble as a child.

It's the last nerve Jack has, "Well, perhaps you need to unlearn some tricks."

Alana glances between them before cutting in, "Why not have a conversation with Hannibal? He was there, he knows what you went through." Will winces at the wording, licking his lips. Because he was also there and also knows what Hannibal went through. He was there all those years ago and he can't look the man in the face because the boy he used to be left him behind. And the man that boy became doesn't remember him, and Will can't take it.

He can't bring himself to fight with Alana, so instead he gathers and flees without another word. Jack yells after him, and he only walks faster. A conversation with Hannibal.

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His palms sweat uncontrollably when he smooths down the front of his shirt, and he just hopes Lecter doesn't try to shake his hand again. He drives to Baltimore, the address Jack gave him, and sits outside to breathe for a few minutes before walking stiffly to the door. The waiting room is elaborate and comforting, the color scheme works well. Will doesn't doubt that Hannibal himself designed the interior. He sits down, willing his knees to stop shaking. Since Hannibal doesn't remember him, his reactions must seem more unusual than he typically is.

The door to the office opens and Will jumps, standing and wiping his hands again before turning face Lecter. The man is dressed just as sharp as the first time, his hair is tamed and his suit pristine. He smiles warmly, and Will clenches his fist and returns it. It looks more like he's in pain.

Hannibal glances at his hands and then back at his face, and Will can tell that's when he decides not to shake his hand. "Good to see you again, Will. Come in."

The office is just as beautiful as the waiting room, even more so. It's decorated modestly and warm. Will is drawn to the next floor, admiring the extensive book collection. "You may go look around if you'd like," he says comfortingly, and Will glances at him while he shifts through papers on his desk. Will takes the offer, climbing the wooden ladder.

Hannibal watches him from the corner of his eye, interested in the way the man carries himself. Appearing so weak yet so full of potential. "Your office is very nice," Will comments quietly, and Hannibal watches him as his eyes skim the book spines.

He smiles to himself, "Thank you, I decorated it myself." Just as he suspected, and Will tries to connect how the boy he once knew became this man. Lecter makes a noise and Will turns to look over the balcony.

"What's that?" Will eyes the paper.

"Your psychological evaluation. You are totally functional and more or less sane, well done." Will's eyebrows pull together at Hannibal's friendly smile and his lips twitch.

"Did you just rubber stamp me?" Isn't he just full of surprises.

"Yes. Jack Crawford may lay his weary head to rest knowing he didn't break you and our conversation can proceed unobstructed by paperwork," Hannibal says honestly.

"You're going to lie to Jack?" Hannibal smiles, he sounds like a child afraid to disobey a parent.

"Lie? No. I'm going to give him what he wants so you can have what you need without Jack Crawford pressing on you or I for more information."

Will chews that over briefly before inhaling deeply, "Jack thinks that I need therapy." Hannibal keeps his smile in place, elated that Will took the bait. Elated that he will have access to this man without the direct supervision of Crawford. "What you need is a way out of dark places when Jack sends you there."

"Last time he sent me into a dark place, I brought something back." The past.

" A surrogate daughter?" It catches Will off guard and he turns back to face Lecter over the railing, "You saved Abigail Hobbs' life. You also orphaned her. That comes with certain emotional obligations, regardless of empathy disorders."

He covers his slight embarrassment with aggravation, "You were there. You saved her life too. Do you feel obligated?"

"Yes. I feel a staggering amount of obligation. I feel responsibility. I've fantasized about scenarios where my actions may have allowed a different fate for Abigail Hobbs." It's certainly not the answer he expected, and certainly not a question he expected an honest answer to anyway. He hesitates again, unsure why the whole situation doesn't sit right with him.

"Jack thinks Abigail Hobbs helped her dad kill those girls," he says it numbly, disgusted by the mere mention of it.

"How does that make you feel?"

He makes a face at the typical question, "How does it make you feel?"

" I find it vulgar." He meant it to sound biting, but is once again surprised Hannibal answered, and answered honestly.

"Me too."

" And entirely possible," Hannibal adds it, carefully observing Will's reaction, and he can sense the anger flair.

"It’s not what happened.," it leaves no room for argument, and Hannibal drops the conversation.

"Jack will ask her when she wakes up, or he’ll have one of us ask her."

Will's defenses are back up, and his rudeness spikes. Hannibal is surprised that it doesn't directly annoy him. "Is this therapy, or a support group?"

He chuckles, unaffected, " It’s whatever you need it to be." The statement throws Will again, and he feels the tension leak from his body. Hannibal isn't trying to make this worse. "And, Will, the mirrors in your mind can reflect the best of yourself, not the worst of someone else."

That confuses Will more and he huffs in frustration. Unable to read this man that had at one time been a mere shell. There's too much going on here, Will senses double implications in everything he says, yet he can't tell if he's making them up or if they're real. He climbs down the ladder, debating if he should mention the past to Hannibal and see what happens. When he turns to face the man, and he's leaning on his desk with his head tilted, Will can't even look him in the eyes let alone bring up something so terrible.

He tries to imagine how he'd say it, 'You do know I was the boy who held you in your bed when you screamed in your sleep' or 'I know you aren't as well put together as you seem, I saw you covered in bruises, afraid of your own shadow' just don't seem right. Instead Will smiles slightly, which Hannibal of course returns.

"The world is full of bad, Will. It's up to us ourselves not to get caught up in it." He wonders if he thinks about his childhood while he says things like that. 'I know you know that better than others' Will imagines himself saying. He tries to picture the look it would bring to Hannibal's face.

"I know that, it's just hard for me to look sometimes."

"You need a gauge to remind yourself who you are while you're peeking in the darkness of another's mind. I can be that gauge for you, a paddle to use in stormy weather." The poetry in the statement makes it beautiful. It twists Will's heart strangely, 'Like I was once your gauge, when you needed someone solid to cling too after they raped you.' Will shakes the disgusting thought from his mind angrily.

He only realizes he hasn't spoken when Hannibal adds, "If you'll let me, that is." Will only hesitates a second before nodding jerkily. Hannibal smiles a bit wider, "Then we can meet weekly, or as much as you need. I suspect we will grow rather friendly, and I always have time for friends."

Will nearly laughs out loud while Hannibal writes in his appointment book. Lecter is careful to only show semi friendly and partially professional interest, though he feels that there is so much more here. The vastness and endless possibilities excite him. When he turns around again, Will is only half a foot away, watching him intently. Yes, a very interesting man indeed.

He challenges Will this time, extending a hand. Much to his surprise, Will doesn't hesitate to shake it, "Thank you, Doctor Lecter."

"Of course, Will." They smile politely at each other, and Hannibal doesn't feel Will responding to him like everyone else always has. He not intimidated, and he's hardly captivated, if at all. A leveled playing field, very interesting.

Will departs abruptly, leaving Hannibal behind his desk pondering the scent of swirling emotions he can smell still lingering in the room. Will is unstable creature, already prone to influence. He's already closer to the edge than he thinks, Hannibal can taste it on his tongue. He just needs a push.

Will drives faster than he usually does, debating the pros and cons of telling Hannibal that they already know each other. Reminding him, actually. He grips the wheel tight, remembering moments when Hannibal whimpered into his neck after a trip into the dean's office and when he'd dig his fingers into the tinted skin and lick his lips.

He remembers watching older boys beat Lecter until the boy couldn't focus on any one thing. Will can practically feel Hannibal's shirt under his hand while he leads him away from the mess, watching through his eyes as his mind was overwhelmed and then silent.

Hannibal's life had moved on, progressed far beyond what Will imagined he could. If he really doesn't remember Will, what else has he repressed? Would Will's information open floodgates that Lecter worked so hard to close?

Was it worth it?

Will debates the whole way home, distractedly feeding his dogs and showering. He can't think of anything but Hannibal, seeing the man and the boy side by side and wondering if its humanly possible that it's not the same person.

How foolish would he feel then?

He nearly calls Hannibal five times that night before finally deciding to lay down. He dreams of stags and Hobbs and crying children.

# Amuse-Bouche: Part Two

The next day, Hannibal calls Jack early as promised. "I suspect Will Graham is recovering well from his encounter with Hobbs, I see no reason he could not return to field work."

He smiles though Crawford can't see at the relief in his voice, "That's great, thank you Doctor."

"Rest assured, I even got him to agree to more sessions, thus to ensure he continues to recover. I can continue to monitor him as he works for you in the field."

There's a brief silence, and Hannibal knows the other man is surprised, "I certainly didn't expect that, but that's wonderful and extremely helpful. I ant thank you enough."

No, I can't thank you enough for giving me Will Graham, he wants to say. Instead he politely ends the conversation and makes himself the same breakfast he brought to Will's. That first day was a day to celebrate, after all.

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Will practices shooting to blow off steam, and to ensure that next time it won't take so many shots to bring down one man. When Beverly finds him down there, her snark and ease has him swallowing hard. When she touches him to readjust his stance and he feels something flutter in his belly he cringes, unused to the touches and disgusted by his craving for more.

It had been so long since anyone just...touched him. How unprofessional, he chides himself.

When she asks what he knows about gardening, it takes him a moment to gather himself and understand she's kidding. When he hears its a crime scene, murder and gardening in the same sentence makes him flinch.

He stares at the ground while Beverly walks with him to Jack's office. He can't look Jack in the eye as he explains their latest case, and he follows him to the car on autopilot, completely silent for most of the ride.

Jack breaks the silent with a deep breath that lets Will know he's been considering his words the whole time, "So, Lecter gave you the all-clear. Therapy might work on you after all." The friendliness in his voice makes Will know he's trying to bring down his defenses.
"Therapy is an acquired taste which I have yet to acquire. But, uh, it served your purpose. I’m back in the field," he tries to play nice, trying to end the conversation before it can somehow be directed back to Lecter.
"Local police found tire tracks on a hidden service road and some small animal traps in the surrounding area."

"He wanted to keep his crop undisturbed," the comment sounds disturbing after he says it, and he internally braces for the look of disgust that should cross Jack's face.
It never comes. "The only thing missing is the scarecrow," Jack agrees. Will frowns slightly.

They approach the team, looking away when three sets of eyes greet them. "OK, we've got nine bodies, various stages of decay, and as you can see, all very well fertilized," Jimmy explains, looking over at Beverly.
"He buried them in a high-nutrient compost. He was enthusiastically encouraging decomposition," she adds. And Will stops listening, focusing in the bodies presented before him. He imagines them being planted, before their bodies were decaying in the earth. Still, but not forced.

"No restraints?" He interrupts, looking up when all eyes turn to him again.
"Just dirt," Jimmy supplies quickly, looking back down at the bodies. Will suspects he makes the man uncomfortable, it doesn't offend him.
"The other end of the air-supply system comes up over there. It isn't a very considerate clean air solution, which clearly wasn't a priority, 'cause he isn't lazy." Beverly adds it thoughtfully, and Will appreciates her ignoring his inability to communicate in turn.
"No, he's not," he agrees quietly, and he can't look away from the shallow graves.
"Welcome back," Jack says sarcastically before turning to leave him there, Will jumps and stares at him as he goes and he knows what's expected of him.

He closes his eyes, prepared to do what he has to do. He lets his mind morph and bend under the the influence of the air around him. It's cold and hot at the same time, and he incisions the receding fungus and filled graves. Dead bodies, but not long enough to be decayed. "I do not bind his arms or legs as I bury him in a shallow grave," he replaces their gardener with himself, watching the dirt fall off his shovel and bury his victims. "He's alive. But he will never be conscious again. He won't know that he's dying. I don't need him to. This is my design."

Awareness rejoins him half way, and he finds himself kneeling over the grave of someone else's victim, a victim that isn't his but he can feel their life leave their body. Hobbs is there, laying in the shallow grave. A grave that isn't his. A little boy is kneeling on the opposite side of the shallow grave, looking down at Hobbs curiously. Will inhales sharply when little Hannibal Lecter looks up at him, his eyes blank. 'You killed him,' the child says, but it's the voice of a man much older. Will twitches, reaching a hand out to stop the boy from touching the corpse of Hobbs in the dirt. The child shies away from the hand, his small hands retracting back to his chest. Hobbs stares unseeing into space, but he isn't dead, the corpse moves and grabs him. He freezes, staring down as the living dead man gasps for air and clings to him weakly, as if he can steal some of Will's life to replace his own. Most would be afraid, Will doesn't move away. He stares down and sees himself killing the man, and suddenly it's not Hobbs but a man with a decayed face and medics are pulling him back because he forgets he has to move to let them work. Hobbs can't be saved he's already dead, and he's not dead in that grave.

Will looks back just to make sure, and Hobbs is certainly not there. The only person it makes him want to talk to is Hannibal, and he isn't sure what disturbs him more. Hobbs in someone else's grave or craving a conversation with Hannibal.

He rides back with Jack in silence again, wincing when Jack stops him before he can hurry to his car. "I heard you're going to keep seeing Dr. Lecter. I think that would be in your best interest," Will swallows roughly and pinches the bridge of his nose.

It's going to be a thing, everyone is going to expect him to spend time with Hannibal Lecter and receive therapy from him. He considers again telling the man, imagining what his reaction would be. Imagining what words he would choose to tell the man that he was the same boy who he showed his bruises to and silently begged to be understood.

"Yeah," he responds quietly, impulsively wiping his glasses on his shirt sleeve.

"Maybe today would be a good time to start," Jack hints, and Will can't believe he's saying it for his own good. It's selfish, Jack wants to rest easy knowing he's pushing Will without Will pushing back. He just nods in response, not trusting his voice as he gets in his car. He's conscious of Jack's eyes on him the whole time as he drives away.

He's already memorized where Hannibal's office is, and the route there from the office and from his house. He finds himself going over and over it in his head, picturing himself driving there and waiting for him to come to the door. 'Hi, I'm Will. That Will. The same Will you kissed and showed your secrets to. The same Will...' He shakes his head to clear his thoughts, refusing to go down that road. Hannibal doesn't remember him, harboring emotional feelings towards him that are years and years old is inappropriate.

He paces the waiting room when he gets there, drying his hands on his pants repeatedly and willing his heart to slow.

Hannibal sits behind his desk completing paperwork. He smiles to himself, realizing he's been considering Will Graham and all the possibilities the man presents him with. A gift given directly to him. That's when he hears someone just beyond the door. His fingertips instantly trace the handle of his scalpel. He inhales deeply, smiling wider when he scents the distinct scent of Will Graham as if it was meant to be, a scent that he already identifies with so well. He hears the man's anxious pacing beyond the door, licking his lips at the flutter of nervous energy that wafts around him. Hardly any work so far and Will is already coming to him on his own.

Will finally prepares himself to knock on the door, flinching when it's pulled open before he can tap his fists on the door. Hannibal stands there, eyebrows raised in surprise, his coat folded over his arm, "Good evening, Will. You're early."

Will's eyes nervously flicker to his coat and then back to his face, and he takes an instinctive step back; "I'm sorry, I don't want to keep you, I can come back when it's time."

Hannibal smiles easily at him, and Will looks away from his face, "Nonsense, Will. You're always welcome. Please, come in."

Will smiles jerkily, clutching his psych eval tightly in his fists while Hannibal reseats himself behind his desk. He looks at Will expectingly, and Graham shivers under his gaze. "This may have been premature," he blurts, handing the paper over to Hannibal with a shaky hand.

Lecter looks down at it, careful to keep his face indifferent, "What did you see, out in the field?" The way Hannibal already knows is a comfort and a worry.

He doesn't read too much into it, "Hobbs."And you, as a child. He frowns.

Interesting, Hannibal thinks, "An association?" Will paces a bit before finally settling in a seat, and Hannibal comes to stand in front of his desk, leaning on it casually.

Hobbs wasn't an association, nor little Lecter. Hobbs was, "A hallucination," he says quietly, "I saw him lying there in someone else's grave." With a younger you staring down at him.

"Did you tell Jack what you saw?" If Jack knows then he must act. But of course Will wouldn't tell him, he's too afraid of what people think to ever share, especially with someone like Jack.

"No!" It comes out more defensive than he intends, and he back peddles; inhaling deeply to calm himself.

Hannibal ignores it, "It's stress, not worth reporting," he reassures gently, "You displaced the victim of another killer's crime with what could arguably be considered your victim." He chooses his words carefully, selecting what will sound exactly the right balance of comforting with an undertone of antagonizing. Feeding into the guilt he knows Will feels.

"I don't consider Hobbs my victim," Will says slowly, taking the bait.

"What do you consider him?" Will ponders the innocence of the question. He convinces himself that everything with Hannibal sits so strange with him because of their unspoken past.

"Dead?" It's not the answer he expected, but it pleases Hannibal all the same.

"Is it harder imagining the thrill somebody else feels killing, now that you've done it yourself?" Will nods slightly and looks away, and Hannibal gives him a break from that line of questioning, intrigued with the case enough to "The arms.
Why did he leave them exposed? To hold their hands? To feel the life leaving their bodies?" It's double ended, playing right into knowledge he wishes to have, poorly disguised as a psychiatrist's typical prying.

"No, that's too esoteric for someone who took the time to bury his victims in a straight line. He's more practical," Hannibal admires the way Will speaks of this killer, the look in his eyes when he considers his crimes.

"He was cultivating them," he prompts further, interested in observing further. Interesting how Will opened up to him so quickly, especially someone so reserved. Hannibal suspects he was searching for someone to share his inner darkness and gift with all along. There couldn't be anyone better, Hannibal thinks. Two different types of people, total opposites that aren't really opposite at all.

"He was keeping them alive. He was feeding them intravenously," he shares, inviting Hannibal into the details of the case.

"But your farmer let his crops die. Save for the one that didn't," it's intriguing the way they're speaking of victims as crops, speaking how the killer would speak of them- and Will pays no mind to it, the way Hannibal falls right into it. Undisturbed like someone who has never been exposed to such atrocities should be.

"Well, and the one that didn't died on the way to the hospital, though they weren't crops; They were the fertilizer. The bodies were covered in fungus," fungus and fertilizer, such a way to speak of people.

"The structure of a fungus mirrors that of the human brain an intricate web of connections," Hannibal makes the jump, ready to ring the conversation back to Will himself. He wants to bind Will's image of himself to the crimes of these killers. Associations do come quickly, Hannibal wants Will to associate himself with the killers he investigates.

"So maybe he admires their ability to connect the way human minds can't," he's slightly disappointed that Will stumbles right into what he wants.

Will cant believe he's having this conversation with Hannibal. He can't believe the man isn't disturbed or distraught. How he doesn't find Will's words and thoughts sickening, he can't understand.

"Yours can," Hannibal adds, tying him back to the conversation.

Will warms slightly at Hannibal's understanding of how he is, as if a part of him does know who he is. He understands, it delights Will.

"Yep. Um yeah, not physically," Hannibal doesn't find his gift strange, he doesn't shy away from it. Hannibal chuckles too.

"Is that what your farmer is looking for? Some sort of connection?" Will doesn't answer, but he wants to ask if that's what Hannibal is looking for, and he wonders if that's what he himself is looking for too. Maybe that's what they're both looking for, too. Maybe the farmer is on to something, but going about it the wrong way. Loneliness can lead people to strange things, search in strange places for the need to alleviate the emptiness they feel. Hannibal stares at him calmly and Will can't bring himself to admit that half of the reason he felt so betrayed by Hannibal leaving him all those years ago, and not remembering him now is because he was the one person that made Will feel less lonely. Leaving and not remembering means he didn't have the same impact.

He'd thoroughly enjoy sitting with Will and talking for the rest of the night, watching intently the way Will's face morphs and he thinks, except they are no longer alone. He subtly inhales, focusing beyond the scent of Will to smell another person just beyond his door. Will doesn't know that Hannibal was in fact expecting another appointment, a woman. He had detected something odd about her from the moment she contacted him. Insisting on a specific time and date, a time that would have her right after Will, despite his early arrival.

"Sometimes I wonder if I'm capable of connecting to people," Will says suddenly, his eyes focused on the floor. Hannibal eyes him curiously, a million answers running through his mind. The woman's scent beyond the door distracts him, and he decides that the woman can't be trusted enough for him to continue the conversation. Will is his experiment, and his alone, if anyone else is interested in Will; he must be sure to protect what is his.

"We all are, in different ways. You adopt strays to connect to, because you're unsure of how people will react to you. Consider that for your next visit, but I'm afraid our time is up." The abrupt closure and cryptic answer has Will's eyebrows pulled together in confusion. The brief flicker of hurt and rejection play across his features before his face is blank again. Hannibal almost feels guilty, sending the man he's trying to draw towards him away after he'd just opened a new door.

Will feels the warmth of human connection burn and then cool before dissipating all together. He feels a chill of loneliness creep up his spine and he stands quickly, "Thank you." The words burn his throat, just as he was considering the idea that perhaps Hannibal could understand him much like he once had. The opportunity for friendship seems to evaporate at the professional look on Hannibal's face as he escorts him to a different exit than he had entered from. His words aren't reaching the man beyond professional, and he realizes Hannibal is doing this for Jack Crawford.

# Amuse-Bouche: Part Three

"Have a good evening, Will," the man says, and then he is alone in the darkening night. His hands shake when he gets in his car, and he considers never going to see Hannibal again. The thought hurts worse than Hannibal not remembering him, and he realizes the betrayal feels so acute because Hannibal didn't react as he wanted. He wanted some indication that they were connecting with each other, and instead the man had cut him short.

Confused, Will tries not to think on the long drive home.

Hannibal gathers himself, reorganizing his office and hiding any information he has written on Will away in his drawers before opening the door to look at the woman before him. He tries to keep his eyes from narrowing at her; the long red hair, pale skin, and bright eyes would be impossible not to place. She has guts, he'll give her that. She wants a story and she will do anything to get it, ambitious.

Ambitious with the wrong person.

"Miss Kimball?" He gives her the chance to change her story, and instead she smiles. It's shy and timid, and he nearly praises her acting ability.
"Yes."
"Good evening. Please come in," he says pleasantly, licking his lips as she walks past him. Interesting, so many interesting people entering his life lately.

"I've, uh, never seen a psychiatrist before. And I am unfortunately thorough, so you're one of three doctors I'm interviewing. It's more or less a bake-off," she's good, but certainly not an expert. He nearly tells her it's transparent to offer up too much information unprompted when telling a lie.
"I'm very supportive of bake-offs. It's important you find someone you're comfortable with," he answers genuinely, feigning ignorance. She buys it.
"I can imagine you as my therapist, which is good. If I can't visualize opening up emotionally, I know it would be a problem," flattery and overly thorough with information, rookie liar. Or a decent liar used to dealing with fools.
"May I ask why now?" He watches her visibly back peddle, the nerves showing on her face. It could be excused as nerves of the situation, but he knows better.
" Do you mind if I ask you a few questions first?" She counters, sitting down.
"Of course not," he relents, tiring of the charades.
"I love that you've written so much on social exclusion. Since that's why I'm here, I was wondering–" he would roll his eyes at her if it wasn't unspeakably rude.
"Are you Freddie Lounds?" He allows himself the rudeness of interruption since she'd been rude the whole time herself. She's well known, a little fish trying to play with sharks. Of course she wouldn't expect him to be an avid fan of her dramatic and tasteless articles, but lying when you attach photos to your public writing...not a risk she should take, he nearly tells her.

"Ah…" instead he calmly watches her squirm.
"This is unethical, even for a tabloid journalist," he says, nearly sounding bored. Her nerves spike again.
"I am, uh, I am so embarrassed," he spares her from digging herself a bigger hole with more lies.
" I'm afraid I must ask for your bag."
"What?" He can see in her eyes she knows she's caught.
"Your bag. Please hand it over. I'd rather not take it from you," it's a warning and a threat, and she smartly listens, "Thank you."
He nearly smiles at being correct when he pulls out the recorder and holds it up.
"I was recording our conversation," she stammers, and he loves this game.
"Our conversation? Yours and mine?"
"Yes," and she's not lying, she's omitting.
"No other conversation?"
"No," she's one lie away from really making him angry, but he gives her one more chance to speak honestly.
"You were very persistent about your appointment time. How did you know when Will Graham would be here?" He asks, and she must pick up that he isn't going to keep this up much longer. P
"I may have also recorded your session with Will Graham," she amends.
"You didn't answer the question. How did you know?" Her source must be someone Will works with, someone he or Jack would have told about continuing their sessions. He'd like to silence them early, and spare Freddie. She can be useful to him, of course he sees that. That usefulness and potential to work in his favor is what saves her life for now, though she'll never know that.
"I can't answer that question." He nearly rolls his eyes and turns to walk away.
"Come. Sit by me," it's time to end the games. She can't antagonize Will until he's ready.
"Delete the conversations you recorded. Doctor-patient confidentiality works both ways, please." He watches her obey him, pleased that the ever rude and overbearing Freddie Lounds yielded to him so easily. "You've been terribly rude, Miss Lounds. What's to be done about that?"

He looks t her with lidded eyes, patiently watching the fear flicker across her features, "I'm sorry, I crossed lines. I should have known a man like you would see right through me." She smiles slightly at him and flicks her hair over her shoulder. She's relentless, switching to flattery and seduction. Her small hand finds his thigh and squeezes, "I hope you can forgive me." He looks down at her hand as it moves up his thigh slightly higher, then at her face indifferently.

"I admire your persistence," he hesitates when he feels her fingers flex, her nails scrapping the inside of his thigh. "Though I will inform you now, I will not be manipulated into telling you anything about Will Graham. Despite your attempts to seduce me, which are also transparent." He leaves the threat out of his tone, simply stating the fact. Her hand boldly moves to his crotch and she moves closer to him. Her nails tease the front of his pants and he smiles at her.

"I didn't think you could be manipulated," she whispers, squeezing slightly. He holds his iron grip on control and remains impassive.

"I'm sure whoever informed you of when Mr. Graham would be here was manipulated by your bold sexual offerings, but I can assure you I am not that desperate. I can not be persuaded with sex, although I do find it interesting you so willingly give up your body to get what you want." Her face hardens and her aggravation shows through finally, and her hand is gone.

"Alright, alright," and she stands up.

"Miss. Lounds, there are many ways to get information on Will Graham, continue what you are doing and you will get what you want, just not from me." Understanding colors her face and she smirks.

"I'll leave you out of it, if you can assure me no one will hear of our little meeting?"

He smiles at her kindly and stands, extending his hand for her to shake. "Of course, doctor patient confidentiality, remember?" She smiles wider, and he can feel he's earned her respect. Good. He'll need it to stay out of the situation.

She shakes his hand with a firm and confident grip, "Thank you, Doctor Lecter. Good to meet you."

"The pleasure was all mine, Miss. Lounds." He listens to the click of her shoes as she leaves, waiting until she is gone completely before gathering his things to go for the night. He nearly calls Will, a strange sensation in his stomach from letting the man depart on such a note. His betrayal will come, and indeed it will hurt, but he has no interest in causing him emotional pain before the time is right. Not directly, at least. Will won't realize it's him until it's too late. Apologizing would undo their last encounter. Instead, he goes home and ponders something to eat.

His stock is running low, his options less than usual. He licks his lips at the thought of having a wide selection of meats again, the thought of the effort and hunt he'd have to go on makes his stomach rumble. He nearly closes the door to gather his things and go now, and then his phone rings. He glares at it, Jack Crawford's name appears on the screen and he scowls, "Hello, Jack."

"Evening, Doctor. Sorry to bother you so late. I was just curious if Will has been to see you today," Hannibal unwraps the liver he'd refrigerated.

"Indeed he has, upon his own freewill." The gears turn in his mind, and a smile breaks on his lips.

"Yes, that's good. I was wondering if he was well?" Professional concern is in his tone, but Hannibal suspects selfish desires below. He doesn't want to be responsible for bad things happening to Will.

"He was well, better than I expected. I was wondering, Jack. Would you care to join me tonight? I'll prepare dinner," he casually changes the subject from Will. In order for his plan to work, he'll need to have everyone on his side. He extends the list to Freddie Lounds, Jack Crawford, Alana Bloom, and Abigail Hobbs. There's a place for each of them in his game,

and he intends to start early. "Say, around seven in the evening?" He glances at the clock, it's nearly five.

There's an undisguised interest in Crawford's voice, "That would be wonderful, I didn't know you cooked."

He tries to imagine himself actually friends with Jack, and sees no way to make it work. He'd have no use for him if it wasn't for Will Graham. "Indeed I do, I enjoy it. Though I unfortunately don't have many people to share it with enough, perhaps you can experience my menu."

Jack chuckles, "The way to my heart is food, Doctor Lecter. I look forward to it."

"As do I, Jack."

"I will see you then," and he hangs up. Hannibal smiles slightly when he puts the phone down, deciding a dish in his mind and rewrapping the liver. His life was starting to become mundane, and suddenly Will Graham was presented to him. He'd have to thank Alana Bloom.

Will fumbles into bed, unable to shake the uncomfortable feeling that's settled in his chest. He isn't even sure he's fallen asleep when he hears the crying. His eyes dart open and he listens intently, sitting up quickly when he hears it again.

He doesn't bother with shoes or a coat when he goes outside, finding a small boy crumpled on his porch. The blood makes his heart race, and he hurries to kneel at the boy's side. He lifts his head, eyes wide and petrified. Black blood oozes from his mouth and he coughs, sending it dripping onto his clothes. Will holds his hands firmly and turns his face to throw it up onto the dirt. "It's alright, Hannibal," he hushes quietly as the boy whimpers and gags. The stag watches them from the field a few feet away, it's black eyes staring Will down intently. Will forces himself to look away when little Hannibal sputters and shivers. He hugs him protectively to his chest as the stag comes closer, his eyes drawn to movement behind the beast. Abigail Hobbs stands there, looking as dead as he father. The boy in his arms smiles at the two, his little white teeth stained red before he looks up at Will.

Will looks back to see the stag and Abigail are gone, then looks back down to see Hobbs has replaced the younger Hannibal. Dead blue eyes stare at him and he struggles to get up and away, stumbling over the stairs.

He sits up straight in bed with a gasp, his dogs flutter nervously around his bed in concern. He groans, ripping the sweat soaked shirt over his head. It disgusts him, the way he shivers under the blanket and closes his eyes wishing Hannibal was there for him to hold on to.

# Amuse-Bouche: Part Four

Chapter Notes

> So let me tell you what the trouble is with writing this... I have to watch the episodes and get the dialogue and what's happening in each of the, in order to stay consistent. I found some of them typed up online but not all so that's the hold up. If anyone is willing to help write out some of the dialogue (if you find yourself rest hint any) and what happens (just a brief reminder so I don't forget anying) it will really move things along. But I will tell you I have the chapter Will tells Hannibal already written. And the end of the last chapter which would be the last episode.... Just have to get there.

He cooks and prepares himself, cleaning up a bit and redressing himself in his suit instead of his apron. Jack is punctual, as he suspected he would be. The final corse was just getting the finishing touches when the door bell rang and he smiled down at the dish in his hand.

He opened the door and smiled as charmingly as he could manage, and Jack returned it. They had already started a personal relationship in Jack's eyes, the man admired him. It was perfect really. "Good evening, Jack. Please come in."

"Evening, Doctor. Your home is lovely and dinner smells better than anything I've smelled in awhile," Hannibal accepted the flattery with a nod of modesty, and leads Jack to sit.

"Thank you, I actually just finished preparing our meal. Please sit," he pulls the chair out for Jack, smirking at the look of surprise at his manners. Rudeness is never tolerated, not even from himself. He poured Jack a glass of wine, and filled his own.

"You certainly know how to host, doctor."

"I enjoy having people for dinner, and its only right to ensure everyone is treated well," he says simply, turning to collect their first dish.

He sets it down and Jack nearly salivates, "Loin, served with a Cumberland sauce of red fruits."
"Loin. What kind?"
Hannibal is careful to adjust his napkin without looking up, "Pork."

Jack tastes the meat and Hannibal tries not to look too interested, "Wonderful. I don’t get many opportunities to, uh, eat home-cooked meals. My wife and I both work, and, uh, as hard as I tried not to, I did wind up marrying my mother."

"Your mother didn’t cook?" He inquires, deciding that getting in Jack's head Will play in his favor as well.

"She did, she did. I only wish she didn’t. There was this meal she used to prepare. She liked to call it “oriental noodles”. Spaghetti, soy sauce, bouillon cubes, and spam. I was raised thin as a youngster." Hannibal feigns interest, smiling politely.

"Well, next time, bring your wife. I’d love to have you both for dinner." He grins widely when Jack smiles gratefully. He and himself, they enjoy their shared jokes.

"Thank you. Mmm. Lovely. So, why do you think Will Graham — came back to see you?" He can't say he's surprised the conversation is right back to Will, right where he doesn't want it.

" I’m sure he recognizes the necessity of his own support structure if he is to go on supporting you in the field."

"Well, I believe that a guy like Will Graham knows exactly what’s going on inside of his head, which is why he doesn’t want anyone else up there," Hannibal can't say he disagrees from experience.

He moves on, "Are you not accustomed to broken ponies in your stable?"

"You think Will Graham’s a broken pony?" Hannibal can't help but feel every question from Crawford is for a higher purpose, that every answer is carefully broken down and considered.

"I think you think Will is a broken pony. Have you ever lost a pony, Jack?" He deflects and returns the view to Jack, careful to reveal nothing. He wants Jack on his side and trusting him, without saying enough that will implicate him with too much knowledge. Less talking, more listening.

"If you’re asking me whether or not I’ve ever lost someone in the field, the answer is yes. Why?" Of course he already knows that, but he also knows seeds of doubt are planted with subtle implications and few words, he's mastered it.

"I want to understand why you’re so delicate with Will. Because you don’t trust him, or because you’re afraid of losing another pony?"

"I’ve already had my psych eval," he says it lightly but Hannibal knows he's clamming up.

"Not by me. You’ve already told me about your mother. Why stop there?"

Jack chuckles and sighs, and takes the bait. He isn't as forth coming as he could be, but Hannibal listens to whatever he chooses to tell. Basic and superficial things, and Hannibal is attentive the entire time. By the end of the meal, he's pleased with his work and his progress. Jack Crawford will play right into his plan. If he's to use Will to get himself out from under his crimes, while making him see but taking his credibility, he'll need everyone exactly where he wants him. The way Crawford smiles at him when he departs is convincing that Jack will make it easier than he anticipated.

He ponders the strange Will Graham while he showers and and retires for the night, wondering how he got so lucky to have such a specimen handed to him.

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Hannibal Lecter doesn't dream, he sleeps with no thoughts coursing through his mind. That's how it had been since he'd learned what control meant. It had taken him years.

That's why it's unheard of when he falls asleep, his mind turning against him and slipping from the control he has over it. Keeping him under while he tries to wake up.

*The first thing I'm aware of is pain shooting up to my shoulder from my arm. I keep my eyes shut to asses the room around me. I'm laying on something soft, a bed perhaps. The biting cold and snow are gone, and instead I'm warm. Memories of Mischa and my parents and the pigs float behind my eyelids and I whimper, opening my eyes just to escape the images.*

*It's too bright and I squint up at bleary faces above me. Someone is holding my arm still, wrapping it tightly. I blink up at the people surrounding me, my heart hammering harder. I look down at my body and I'm naked, warm rags pressed against my thighs and chest. "Are you with us, Hannibal?" The man wrapping my arm asks gently, and I twist my head to look. Someone touches my other arm and I jerk at the contact, flinching away. "Stay still, we need to bandage you up."*

*There are so many of them, and another reaches forward to hold my shoulder while the man wrapping my arm pushes on it. Pain rushes through my arm and behind my eyes and I scream, watching as the faces morph into the men from the cabin. They try to grab me to keep me still, but I throw myself from the bed and tumble to the floor. My arm locks and protests, pain flaring so badly I nearly throw up. The need to get away is too strong and I crawl, cradling my arm to my chest until I can push myself into the corner. My good hand gently touches the pained one, feeling the bone not lining up correctly and I can feel its broken. I don't want to remember how it got that way. They're watching me, and I can't look away or blink because I'm afraid these unknown faces will turn into the ones that haunt my dreams.*

*One steps closer and I growl, the noise just erupts in my chest and I can't stop it. Another man reaches out to touch his arm, "Don't go closer, he's afraid. Let him calm down," they're voices are heavy with accent, one I can't identify. All the men back up except the one who spoke. He grabs the blanket from the bed, and kneels. My eyes watch him closely, ready to run at any sudden movements. I'd go for the door, it's not far away. I could make it and keep running...*

*"You're shaking, take the blanket," he makes no move to hand it to me, and I hug my knees tighter and clutch my arm, "Do you remember where we found you? You fainted in the snow. One of my men knew your father, he recognized you. Can you tell me how old you are?" I stare at the man, trembling from the cold, and try to force sounds from my mouth. My throat and lips are painfully dry and I try to clear them, wincing. "Get him some water," he says over his shoulder and I cough. He smiles slightly, scooting closer to me.*

*My heart lurches and I try to inhale, "Calm down, I just want to put the blanket on you." The man appears with water and hands it off, and the kneeling one comes closer. A noise comes*

*from my chest and my heart beats so hard it hurts. His face melts and its the man who bit the head from the bird. The one who ate Mischa.*

*He blocks me into the corner and I scream, my bad arm throbbing when I try to hit at him with it. He wraps a firm grasp on my wrist and the pain is unbearable and I try to bite at him. "We need to calm him down," he instructs, and I knock the water from his hand and he uses it to grab my other wrist. They advance on me then, holding my bad arm still and hoisting me back onto the bed. I'm making noises but I don't think they're words. There's a pinch of a needle and someone is petting my hair. "Easy," he whispers, bringing a cup of water to my lips. I have to drink it, my sore throat needs it. I drink until I choke, finding I can't fight them anymore as my muscles get weaker and weaker. The ability to fight drains, but the need to does not. I can't look anymore and I shut my eyes and sob brokenly. My heart hurts worse than my arm.*

He can feel its a nightmare, and he tries to coax his mind back to awareness slowly, only to be jolted awake when he watches himself in a much younger body convulsing uncontrollably on a bed. Hannibal blinks at the ceiling, squinting to make out the patterns left in the paint from the brush. His fingers subconsciously touch his sweaty chest and run down the ridges of his rib cage. He rolls over, finding the other side if his bed cold from lack of body heat. He will not admit to himself that sometimes the past creeps back up on him and he has to breathe slowly and remember those days of his life didn't count. He won't acknowledge the quiet hum of the urge to have a root to reality, someone to ground him back in the moment. He will not allow himself to crave the closeness of another human being, and he will not reduce himself to wanting someone beside him in his bed. Though the idea of being alone at times like this doesn't hurt him, it makes him suddenly more aware of the emptiness inside him. It makes him think about it curiously, ponder the void that is all darkness. He considers that maybe a warm body to grasp when uncomfortable thoughts plague him may fill the void temporarily, then he chases the thought away.

He's just tired, he concludes. It was a stressful day and one unfortunate dream and a cold bed is requiring so much thought because he's half asleep. Bedelia crosses his mind and he lets the thought of sharing the darkness of the dream with her silence the discomfort of being alone with his thoughts. He pulls the blankets up higher and mentally reads his recipes until the tension inside him releases and he sleeps again, blissfully empty.

# Amuse-Bouche: Part Five

Chapter Summary

Let me just say you're all wonderful, to see this story and Silence still getting kudos and comments even after I was a terrible person and hadn't been updating is amazing and you all made my day.

Slowly but surely.. I got another one for you. I just fear it'll get to be too much blubbering before the reveal (which is written). I actually took some of the worst college classes this semester and two classes back to back require warm body in chair but mind elsewhere- so I plan to do yet writing for this on Tuesdays and Thursdays so optimistically an update ever week or so (encouragement always helps!)

I also encourage and ask for any requests you have, answer what you want to read in the story! I aim to please!

My other request is that if you see a typo or error, please let me know so I can fix it. I'm writing straight through here in a hot boring classroom where this is the only thing that keeps me awake- on an iPad. So if there's anything you see just let me know so I can correct it and make the reading easier.

And I added chapter titles to correlate with the episodes so it's easier to follow the progress through the show!

Will won't deny he's tired, his eyes tingle slightly with the urge to close and rest. It's nighttime, not that he'd be able to sleep anyway- but the option would have been nice. He frowns to himself, knowing that being alone with himself would be bad dreams and a young Hannibal Lecter joining the disturbing images in his mind. He supposes he'll take a half decomposed human mushroom garden. He should be home really, teaching and fixing boat motors while throwing sticks to his dogs, helping the locals occasionally. When Jack walked into his classroom, he should have laughed and ran; his life was hard enough without this.

Such a selfish line of thought when there's innocent people being killed, he reminds himself he's here for them not for Jack.

"What were they soaked in?" He asks distantly, hazed out by the destroyed corpses in front of him.

Zeller glances at him; "A highly concentrated mixture of hardwoods, shredded newspaper, and pig poop perfect for growing mushrooms and other fungi." Price rolled his eyes to himself and shot a look at Beverly. Jimmy Price he liked- Will couldn't see the man having a

bad bone in his body; unlike Brian Zeller, who he knew would lead a conversation about his poor social skills and strange behavior.

"It was not the mushrooms, though. They all died of kidney failure," Brian added, and Will's eyebrows pull together with interest. Kidney failure, nearly unrelated to them being buried alive and planted since they were provided bare minimum to live. Unless it was a prior health condition...

"Dextrose in all the catheters. He probably used some kind of dialysis or peristaltic to pump fluids after their circulatory systems broke down," Beverly concluded, and Will knew. He jumped right to what he suspected, silently pleased that despite his internal struggles he could still do the job.

"Force-feeding them sugar water?" Will asks more to himself than the others, tying together his suspicions out loud.

"You know who loves sugar water? Mushrooms. They crave it," Jimmy adds, assuming the obvious reason for the presence of sugar. Will doesn't listen enough to correct him just yet, his own mind spinning ahead with what sugar and prior medical problems means.

"Recovering alcoholics. They crave sugar," Brain adds offhandedly, smirking at Jimmy, "Uh, don't take that personally, buddy."
"Oh, I'm not recovering," and of course Jimmy doesn't miss a beat.
"Feed sugar to the fungus in your body, the fungus creates alcohol, so it's like friends helping friends, really," Brian concludes, and Will finally speaks up and brings them back to the current situation.

"It's not just alcoholics who have compromised endocrine systems. They all died of kidney failure? Death by diabetic ketoacidosis," he mutters, voicing his suspicions. Silence covers the room for a moment, and he doesn't look up from the bodies when he feels all eyes on him; a feeling he's grown used to throughout his life.

Beverly breaks the moment and spares Will from speaking more, "Did you know they were diabetics?" She glares at the two other men.
"We don't know they were diabetics," Zeller comments, eyeing Will doubtfully. Will holds back a biting comment about doing his job instead of trying to ensure Will is wrong.

"No, they're all diabetics," he ensures confidently, "He induces a coma and puts them in the ground."

Beverly doesn't doubt him, Will appreciates her instant acceptance in his change of pace, "How is he inducing diabetic comas?"

Sugar, prior heal problems, knowledge of how to treat it.... "Changes their medication. So he's a doctor or a pharmacist or he works somewhere in medical services."

She catches up quick to his train of thought, seamlessly accepting his words while Brian looks on annoyed, "He buries them, feeds them sugar to keep them alive long enough for the circulatory systems to soak it up."

"So he can feed the mushrooms!"

"We dug up his mushroom garden," and they're all on the same page, and suddenly Will's blind jumps in ideas doesn't seem so strange.

"Yeah, he’s gonna want to grow a new one," he says quietly, he feels blank.

They progress quickly from there, and Will fades into the background as soon as Jack is brought up to speed. Will just follows them to the cars and trails behind, silently jogging to keep up as Jack barks orders left and right to anyone who can hear them.

"She’s the chain’s 10th diabetic customer to disappear after filling a prescription for insulin, second to disappear from this exact location," Jack speaks over his shoulder to him, not breaking his long stride that Will hurries along next to.

"And the other eight?"

"All over the county. One pharmacist all over the county as well," and he knows he was right about the killer knowing medication well.

"Floater, huh?"

Jack nods and stomps right up to the counter, "Floater’s floating right here. Still logged in at his work station." And then he's done talking and he booms towards the workers, while Will hangs back cautiously, "Everyone please stop what you are doing. Put your hands in the air! Special Agent Jack Crawford. Which one of you is Eldon Stammets?"

Everyone is frozen in place, stunned, Will can't say he doesn't know the feeling, "Eldon was just here. Just now." The man stammers nervously.

"Is his car still in the parking lot?" Will jumps in, an attempt to get the information without causing further distress.

The man glances back at Jack with wide eyes, and Crawford sighs audibly, "His car!?"

As soon as the man points to the back, Jack nearly shoves Will to the ground in an attempt to turn him around and everyone is running. Will gets their first, and his blood is pumping when he surveys the inside of the car, then realizes it's the trunk.

Locked away in her own personal hell. "Give me your baton!" His vision tunnels when the trunk is pried opened and he digs into the vile fertilizer and finds a young ladies face. His stomach turns and he finds her throat with vibrating hands, "She's alive!"

Those words never felt so good, it never felt so good to yell them out.

"EMTs! Now!" Will takes his leave when the medics rush the trunk and he backs up. He removes his hands, but not his eyes and he can't look away as they unbury her body. "All right. We know his name, we have his address, we have his car." He can feel Jack's eyes on him, and he's taking to him right now, but he just can't look away as she's lifted from the trunk to a gurney.

Jimmy appears and saves him from having to talk, "Jack, we just checked the browser history at Stammets' work station..."

"Am I gonna wanna hear this?"

Ever honest, "No. And yes, but mostly no."

He trails behind them on autopilot, the emergency is over for now and he lets himself retreat.

The fluorescent lights inside make him squint, and his hands haven't stopped shaking when they return to Brian and Beverly. "Freddie Lounds. TattleCrime.com," Brian informs them, glancing at Will quickly. Jimmy and Beverly look at him too, and he stares at the counter to not acknowledge the attention. Experience has told him in his life that keeping to himself won't excuse him from everyone else's scrutiny.

"The FBI isn't just hunting psychopaths, they're headhunting them too, offering competitive pay and benefits in the hopes of using one demented mind–" Beverly cuts herself short and looks at Will sympathetically. He pushes his glasses up his face and his hands find his pockets.

"Keep going," Jack encourages impatiently, as if no one can infer the rest.

"It's about Will," she defends, and Will almost wants to tell her he's used to it.

"Go on," Jack snaps, and he just doesn't care.

"One demented mind to catch..." And she stops again, as if hearing the words aloud will make them real. He lets his mind fill in the blanks, *demented, crazy, unstable, freak*. He smiles painfully at the ground.

It looks more like a grimace, he feels eyes on him and when he glances up, Brian looks away quickly.

Will holds his silence, but he *knows*.

"Son of a bitch," Jack hisses, and he turns and pushes past Will like he isn't even there.

Will isn't even sure he is actually there. He turns to follow, and in his peripheral vision he swears he sees a young dark haired boy sitting at one of the works station.

When he glances back quickly, the chair is empty.

-

Hannibal Lecter enjoys a lot of things in his life, but sitting down catching up on anything and everything is one of his favorite times. Freddie Lounds takes care of a lot of his catching up, he bookmarks her articles and reflects on them. If only she knew that for their meeting.

Her recent article doesn't surprise him- it's more of a personal attack on Will than an actual account of a story. Whomever informed her of Will's appointment at his office must have

been who gave her enough information to write he article.

*using one demented mind to catch ones just like himself.*

He clicks his tongue; she's obviously spitting back all information she's been fed.

*This dark mind belongs to one Will Graham, called in as a 'consultant' for Jack Crawford;*

Someone on Jack Crawford's team then, someone right there with Will. He wouldn't put it past Will to already know who it is.

*In reality, his seemingly out of the blue jumps in evidence reflect a deep rooted understanding-*

He can practically see the look on Will's face when he reads the words, when he realizes who it was that fed Freddie the information.

*-or even prior knowledge to the cases. Is the FBI that desperate and disorganized that they need to hire one of the men they should be investigating?*

"You are naughty, Miss Lounds," he sighs, and he can practically feel her small hand creeping up his leg.

In his mind, Will's face takes the form of someone or something with no identity.

# Amuse-Bouche: Part Six

Chapter Summary

This is the last part for episode two, and then we move on to episode three. This chapter includes sensitive subjects, such as flashbacks to child abuse.

Chapter Notes

If you have any questions or concerns about what goes on in this chapter, let me know. I'll gladly explain where my ideas for it came from. Slowly but surely, I'm getting there.

Also please point out mistakes you see so I can correct them, this is unbeta'd

"I think it's time we pay Freddie Lounds a visit," Jack grumbles when they make their way back outside. Will inhales sharply, imagining himself in the same room as her now.
"You don't need to do-" he begins quietly, he doesn't need Jack defending him against this woman's attack.
"It's interfering with the case, and making a public spectacle out of people on my team- the hell I do," Will snaps his jaw shut and follows to the cars in silence after that. There is no use arguing with Crawford when he's made up his mind. "I want to scare her," he continues, and barks orders at anyone within earshot. Will notices instantly that he isn't included, and he takes it as a dismissal. He hears Jack tell one of the agents to take him back to his car, and he climbs in without looking back.

It's silent all the way back, only broken when he mumbles a quiet 'thanks' to the agent for the ride. It's only when he's sitting alone in his car, staring out the windshield into the darkness of the parking lot, that he feels the bone crushing emptiness all around him. He tries to imagine himself going home and showering, letting the dogs out and feeding them- then falling into a nice, restful sleep. He can't, instead he imagines never ending nightmares and sweating through his sheets. He has his phone in his hand, and he has no idea who he wants to call. He pretends it was going to be Alana, but instead all he can think is that he wants to call Hannibal.

He isn't sure he doesn't break the phone when he throws it down in the passenger seat and drives off to see Abigail Hobbs. He doesn't bother to brush away the tear that betrays him when he rolls down his face.

-

The staff doesn't find it strange when he shows up anymore, and they don't bother telling him about the visiting hours anymore. He just comes in quietly and takes his normal seat on the small couch in the room. Despite the room not being cold, he feels a persistent chill and covers himself with his jacket. Abigail looks the same- pale, alone,… *innocent*.

He tries to find words to say something to her, since he's been told she can in fact hear him, and just like the times before he fails to find something to say. Instead, he rests his head on the arm of the couch and closes his eyes. He pictures Hannibal resting in the chair beside her bed, sleeping without even a twitch of an eyelid, and he envies him.
The silence in the room, aside from the quiet noises from the machines, lull him into a mind between sleep and reality- and he feels like he's floating there. Suspended in a time when things aren't happening and everything is frozen around him.

He isn't left in peace for long, when the clicking of walking- something large walking, passes just outside the room. He opens his eyes just in time to see the large stag pass; the creature glances in the room on it's way past as if to invite him to follow.

And he does, with one last glance at Abigail's sleeping form on the bed. He stumbles out into the hallway to watch the animal disappear around the corner of the hallway. He doesn't think when he follows, walking slowly in the same direction. He has no intentions of stopping, until he hears quiet sobbing from one of the rooms in the otherwise silent ward. It's the only door opened, and he peers in through the crack to find a boy strapped to the bed.

He already knows it's Hannibal before he enters, but when he's standing beside the bed he looks at the boy in a new light. He's still young, but he looks exactly the same as he remembers. Will stares down at him numbly, watching him cry in his sleep. His wrists are tied unforgivingly tight to the rail on the bed, so tight that Will can practically feel his own hands go numb. At least he has pants on, Will thanks silently while he absorbs the image in front of him. His face is swollen and bruised, forcing him to take wheezing breaths through his mouth. His chest is shadowed with discoloration- the tell tail sign of a recent violent beating. He doesn't expect the pendulum to swing, but when it does he can't stop it.

He reaches his hand out to pull the less damaged eyelid open, and that wakes Lecter up. His eye shuttles around the room before landing on Will's face, then he crumbles in fear. He jerks his head back, and thrashes wildly on the bed. The frame rattles with the strain of holding his wrists down, and he all but wails when Will grabs his face and holds it tightly, "Stop squirming, it only makes it worse." The words leave his mouth and he almost throws up, but he can't stop it. Hannibal stills and shies back against the bed. He resists the undeniable need to continue and reaches for the boy's left hand instead.

He whimpers when the fingers brush his wrist, "I'm only going to untie you, your hands must be hurting." Before he can work on the knot, the pendulum swings again and he's tying them tighter. "You know what happens when you're bad, little Hannibal," he whispers, and when he looks up the one opened eye is staring at him. It's surprising when Hannibal manages to nod his head to confirm he does know what happens when he's bad, "Good boy, it's good you know when you've been bad." Hannibal's been trained, because when Will's fingers press against his lips- he opens his mouth to suck on them without hesitation. It's automatic, the way his free hand starts to work on the button of the cotton pants around Lecter's narrow

waist; but the noise that vibrates through Hannibal's chest is what really shocks him. He *moans* and tugs at his arms to free himself and get *closer*.

Captor bonding, Stockholm Syndrome- intellectually he knows long term sexual abuse can cause the victims to believe they deserve it or even enjoy it. Force yourself to want it and it won't hurt so badly, and that's exactly what happens. He frees the button with a hand that isn't his, and watches when the younger boy raises his hips to help remove them. A tear wets his cheek and Will moves his hand back up to press against the boy's abdomen, mindful of the bruising, "Don't do that, Hannibal," he chokes, retracting his fingers stepping away from the bed. "That's how you managed to make it through all those years, you stopped resisting." He says it more to himself, but Hannibal still looks at him. The boy whines perversely and squirms, and Will feels anger bubble in his chest. "I said stop," and he doesn't sound like himself, Hannibal flinches at the harshness in his voice but shutters when Will takes a step closer again. He isn't sure if he's disturbed by the bulge in Lecter's cotton pants, or disturbed with himself for noticing it in the first place. He tries to remind himself this isn't real, and he never did this to the boy, but when his hand comes forward again to touch and Lecter turns his face into it- he sees red. He lashes out, his fist connecting with Hannibal's head much harder than he'd ever hit anyone. His knuckle digs right into Hannibal's temple and the soft spot above his ear.

The air rushes out of Hannibal's lungs and Will instantly feels bile crawl into his throat, and he grabs Hannibal's chin to hold his face up. "Oh God," he chokes when Hannibal's eyes roll back in his head and his body begins to shake, "No, no, look at me." A seizure, and he forces his fingers into Lecter's mouth to keep him from biting his tongue. "I'm sorry, it's okay," he can't stop crying, even after Hannibal finally stills. This already happened, he reminds himself; Hannibal is a grown man who moved on past this. It feels like an eternity has passed when Hannibal finally opens his good eye again, and Will tries to smile reassuringly at him. "There you go, keep your eye open," the eye looks dazed and unfocused, and Will wonders if he was ever drugged. Sedated he's sure, Hannibal could get extremely hard to handle when he got out of control- not that it was unjustified. The room is cold enough that he can see his breath, and he remembers he was supposed to follow the stag when he hears it's hooves clicking in the hallway again, getting louder as it gets closer.

He hears someone speaking, quietly, far far away. Instead he focuses on the sound of his heart beating and the rise and fall of Hannibal's bruised chest. "You stopped fighting after awhile, you just did what they wanted," he murmurs, and when he meets Hannibal's eye again- there is nothing there. It's as if the lights are off but someone, or some*thing* is home. Right before his eyes, the pupil expands and consumes the colored ring and the whites. Lecter is still, almost peaceful in the way he accepts the darkness.

The clicking stops and Will whirls around to find the stag in the open doorway, clouds of mist burst from it's snout in the cold room. It's massive antlers are bloody.

None of this is real.

“He and the Grandmother discussed better times.”, The old lady said that “in her opinion, Europe was entirely to blame for the way things were now. She said." Will's eyes open, and he blinks a few times to get his bearings. He hasn't moved from his place under his jacket,

and the room isn't nearly as cold as it felt. Alana is perched on Abigail's bed, an open book in her hand. The images from his sleep drift to the back of his mind when he takes her in, and he wonders if he said anything in his sleep.
"What are you reading?" She doesn't jump when he speaks, as if she was waiting for him to wake up. He doesn't let himself hope that she anticipated he would also be here when she came for a visit. "Flannery O'Connor. When I was Abigail's age, I was obsessed. I even tried to raise peacocks because she raised peacocks. But they were really stupid birds," she babbles slightly, her voice getting quieter. Will likes that about Alana, she's open with things about herself. Her honesty is refreshing.

"You could be reading to a killer," and when he looks at Abigail, he hopes she really can't hear him so she never knows he said that. "Innocent until guilty and all that," she replies smoothly, "I'm about to broach the subject of that "Takes One to Know One" article," her eyebrows go up and he looks away from her when she seeks out his eyes directly.
"Oh, that…" He regrets mentioning it, "Did Jack send you?"

"No, I sent me," For Abigail or him, or both? Why did she choose now?
"I don't think we've ever been alone in a room together, have we?" It puts her on the spot, but Alana doesn't back down.
"I haven't noticed," it's a lie and they both know it, "Have we? Not that we're necessarily alone now."

"Yeah, right. Back to "Jack Crawford's crime gimp"." he sighs, and he wonders how much of Freddie Lounds' article she read, or if she knows about it at all.
"It certainly creates an image. I don't need to talk about it if you don't. I just figured you might need a friend after what Lounds wrote, or someone to talk to at least; someone who knows it's not true."

He inhales sharply, "Isn't that why you have me seeing Doctor Lecter? So I can talk about things like this without bothering other people with my issues?"
It comes out harsher than he intends, and he sits up and rubs his face under his glasses, Alana isn't bothered by it, "It's not so you don't bother us, you never bother me. It's because he isn't as close to you, and he's a qualified man. Therapy with another man might be easier for you. Like I said though, you and I don't have to talk about it, as long as you promise me you'll talk to him about it." If only she knew the truth.
She sounds so genuine he almost wants to talk to her about it anyway, "We can talk about or not talk about whatever you want. Actually, I was I was just enjoying listening to you read," reading is comforting and her voice was soothing, it's safer than conversations like these. Simpler.

"Abigail Hobbs is a success for you," she doesn't let him deflect the conversation away. He looks at the girl on the bed and knows that thought she is alive, her life will never be the same.

Even if she is innocent of all crimes, she is still without a family and will forever live in the shadow of what her father did, "She doesn't look like a success."

"Don’t feel sorry for yourself because you saved this girl’s life," and putting it that way, he sounds terrible.

"I don’t feel sorry for myself at all," he feels sorry for her and how when she wakes up, there will be a long road ahead of her, "I feel, um…" What did he feel? "I feel… Good." It sounds more like a question, but she finally relents and lets him off without further questions.

"How about I finish this chapter before I go?" She doesn't wait for answer before she starts reading again, and he smiles to himself and rests his head down again. He doesn't sleep this time, he just listens to her voice and wonders what would happen if she was laying with him surrounded by dogs while she read to him. He opens his eyes as soon as he hears the book close, and he sits up when she adjusts herself and gets her things together. "You should really go home and sleep, Will. Abigail is in good hands," she knows he won't, but she says it anyway. He wishes he could tell her he wouldn't go home and sleep anyway.
"I'll walk you out," is his only reply. He wants to help her with her coat but he's rooted in place. He watches her until she's ready to go, then they make the trip down to the exit in silence.

"Thanks for walking with me, Will," she says quietly, and his voice is trapped in his throat and all he can do is nod and smile. "Make sure you talk to Hannibal," she adds, then she turns and leaves. He watches her until she's in her car. He stares into the darkness outside even after she's gone, and it's only when his phone rings that he remembers he's standing by the doors. He turns to walk back while he fishes it from his pocket, almost walking into someone along the way.
"Hello?"
"It's Jack, are you at the hospital?" He isn't sure why, but the tone of his voice has him running back towards Hobbs' room.
"Yes, I am."
His fears are confirmed when Jack tells him Stammets knows about Abigail Hobbs, and he stuffs it back into his pocket and runs the rest of the way to the nurse's station.
"Where is she?" He feels like Jack when he starts yelling at her blank stare, "Abigail Hobbs, the girl in 408. Where is she?"

"They took her for tests," the woman stutters, and there's no time for half answers.

"Who took her?," again, silence "Who took her?!"
"I don’t know!" The woman stands up, but Will turns and runs again. He isn't so sure where he's going, but he runs back down the hall towards the stairs. That's where he finds Eldon, pushing Abigail down the hall, he sees them from over the sight of his gun. He has no idea where he's taking her, but he calls out to stop him anyway. When the man doesn't stop, he doesn't hesitate to pull the trigger. He saved Abigail once, and he wont let anything bad happen to her now before they get the chance to know the truth. In the corner of his eye, he swears he sees a young boy standing beside Abigail Hobbs on the gurney but he can't focus on that right now.

The man stumbles back and falls against the wall, sliding down much like Hobbs did when he was forced to pull the trigger the first time. He comes closer, and kicks Eldon's gun away from him. The man grunts in pain and squirms on the floor, "What were you gonna do to

her?" He asks distantly.

"We all evolved from mycelium. I'm simply reintroducing her to the concept," and the way he says it like it's the most logical thing in the world makes Will wonder how crazy someone would have to be to think that was something natural to do.

"By burying her alive?" he retorts, and he wants to understand.

"The journalist said you understood me!" That sticks to him, and he winces at the words. He does understand to the extent of someone searching for human connection, he'd spent his whole life doing the same thing.

"I don't," he lies.

Eldon's face falls, and Will almost feels bad about it, "Well, you would have. You would have. If you walk through a field of mycelium, they know you are there. They know you are there. The spores reach for you as you walk by. I know who you're reaching for," That's when Will takes a step back to call Jack. He isn't sure if the man was trying to convince him or himself, "I know. Abigail Hobbs. And you should have let me plant her. You would have found her in a field, where she was finally able to reach back!"

Before he can even call Jack, him and the team come rushing down the hallway and past him. Once again he fades into the background of commotion while Eldon is detained and Abigail and hurried back up to her room. He watches her, still asleep and unaware of all the danger her life is in. Jack clasps his shoulder and he hardly flinches, "You did good, Will." He doesn't stick around to hear more, and he knows all eyes would be on him if he decided to stay longer. He forces himself to leave, and when he's in his car he remembers Hannibal and how Alana had advised him to call. He should, and he wants to.
He doesn't think too much when he does, he doesn't even think about it being nearly after midnight when the phone is ringing.
-
Hannibal is cutting up a liver into manageable slices, enjoying the way it gives under the weight of his hands. He's so engrossed in what he's doing, that he grits his teeth at the interruption of his phone ringing. He wipes his hands off and washes them quickly, "Hannibal Lecter speaking," he answers, not recognizing the numbers.

There's a brief silence that aggravates him more until someone speaks, "Hello, Doctor Lecter. It's Will Graham." The shyness in the man's voice is almost endearing, and he licks his lips. "Hello, Will. Are you alright?" He feels like he's so far ahead of what he anticipated with Will, he's making so much progress of getting the man to trust him. It was so much easier than he had thought.
Hannibal doesn't even sound angry, or tired from being woken up. He must have already been awake, "I'm sorry for calling so late. It's just that I was wondering if you could fit me in tomorrow, anytime. I know it's before our next appointment but…" He trails off, hoping he won't have to finish.

"Of course, seven is my last appointment of the day and you are welcomed to come then. I must ask though, what has caused you to call to move your next visit up, what is bothering you?" He doesn't regret answering the phone now.
"We found the gardener, Eldon Stammets. He came to the hospital and tried to take Abigail Hobbs. I had to shoot him." Hannibal raises his eyebrows in surprise, he bites his lips. Oh,

Will. So much going on for the poor man.
"We can discuss it tomorrow. I assume Abigail is alright, and that you will be alright until tomorrow night?" Will smiles to himself, and he doesn't feel bad for calling anymore. He feels comforted, he feels like Hannibal might really understand him and dare he say, care about him. Maybe telling him about their past wouldn't be so bad.

No. "Yes, she is. I will be too, thank you. I'm sorry again for calling," he puts the car in drive and he's already heading home. He feels better already.
"No need to be sorry, I'm glad you feel comfortable enough with me to call when you are distressed. That is the point to our sessions. Have a good night, Will." Lecter hangs up before he can say anything else, and Will smiles to himself while he drives home. He imagines telling Hannibal about the visions he sees in his dreams about a much younger him, and why exactly he sees them.
He gets home and takes care of the dogs and showers, he lays down and hopes he has a dreamless sleep.
He dreams of fungus expanding across the grass in a distant land, by a small pond with two boys and swans.
-
Hannibal has just put the phone down after saving Will's number when it rings again, and he frustrated to be disturbed again when the number isn't Will's, "Hannibal Lecter speaking," he says again, and there is no silence this time.

"Hello, Doctor. It's Jack Crawford. I'm sorry to disturb you so late," he doesn't want to give Jack a pass for the rudeness of such a late call, "Will Graham was involved in another shooting tonight, and I thought you should know so-"

"I'm aware, Jack. I just spoke with him, he called me and told me about Eldon Stammets and Abigail Hobbs. He asked to move his appointment up to tomorrow." He says it evenly, but he smirks while he does it. As if he or Will need Jack interfering.

"Well, that is impressive Doctor Lecter, I didn't think Will would take to it so well. I guess he knows he needs someone to talk to." He stops talking as if Hannibal is going to agree with him or say anything at all. He let's Crawford absorb the awkward silence until he feels bad, "I'm sorry, Doctor Lecter. I will trust Will to tell you what he has to now, I'm sorry I called so late."
Satisfied that Jack sounds embarrassed enough, "No problem, Jack. Have a good night." He hangs up first and smiles at the phone when he sets it down. He looks back to his food he's preparing, and wonders again just how he got lucky enough to be given the opportunity to be put in such a golden situation.
-
Will gives his lectures and is glad when Jack Crawford doesn't call him for anything. On lunch, Alana comes into his classroom and he glances up quickly from his computer to see she has two sandwiches in her hands. "Hey," she greets, and he smiles at her and removes his glasses to rub his eyes. "I figured you might be hungry, and even if you aren't I am."

He chuckles and she pulls up a chair to sit across from him at his desk. She passes one to him, turkey and cheese plus a bottle of water from her purse. "First Doctor Lecter, now you? Everyone wants to fatten me up."

"Hannibal is always feeding people, a sandwich doesn't hold up to what he serves but it'll have to do," she unwraps her own and takes a bite, and he tries not to stare. "Jack told me about what happened with Stammets at the hospital right after I left," she begins.

"Yeah, I was just glad you were already gone," he glances up as soon as he says it, and the smile on her face tells him she didn't mind him saying it.
"He also told me you called Hannibal, that's a good thing Will. I'm glad you took my advice," she says gently, and his lips twitch into a smile and he busies himself taking a bite.

"Your sandwich is only just behind Hannibal's food," he says, and she laughs. The sound makes his stomach flutter.
"That might be the most insulting thing he's ever heard, don't let him hear you say that."
-
When he shows up at Hannibal's office, he's hardly as nervous as he was the first time. He doesn't even get a chance to knock before Lecter is opening the door, a small smile on his face.

"Good evening, Will. Come in," this time he doesn't feel the need to pace, and he sits down in the chair right away. Hannibal notices this, and smirks when the man can't see, how quickly someone as distrusting as Will is willing to just fall right into something. Graham was just waiting for someone to come along and give him something to place his trust in. He couldn't have picked a better and a worst person.

"Thanks for letting me come," he says quietly, rubbing his palms on the knee of his pants. Hannibal sits across from him and adjusts his suit before interlocking his fingers.
"Of course, you sounded upset over the phone and you must have been very distressed to call and ask for a sooner appointment," Will stares at Lecter's nose to avoid his piercing eyes. When he was younger, his eyes weren't as intense. They were slightly distant and unfocused, Will always wondered if there was something wrong with him, seeing him now he knows he was wrong. "When you shot Eldon Stammets, who was it you saw?"

"I didn’t see Hobbs," he swallows roughly, imagining saying the words he would use to tell the man he saw him tied to bed in his dreams.
"Then it’s not Hobbs’ ghost that’s haunting you, is it? It’s the inevitability of there being a man so bad that killing him felt good," the word good makes his skin crawl and brings him back to reality.

"Killing Hobbs felt just, only good because it was justified," he clarifies.

"Which is why you’re here, to prove that sprig of zest you feel is from saving Abigail, not from killing her dad," prove. He has to prove that shooting someone to death didn't make him feel good, and now he feels sick.

"I didn’t feel a sprig of zest when I shot Eldon Stammets," that's why he's here right now.

"You didn’t kill Eldon Stammets," replies easily, and they're still talking about the deadly encounter with Hobbs.

"I thought about it," he admits, "I'm still not entirely sure that wasn't my intention pulling the trigger."

"If your intention was to kill him, it's because you understand why he did the things he did. It's beautiful in its own way, giving voice to the unmentionable," Hannibal knows he understands Stammets just like Eldon knew it. He can't hide from that anymore, and then he remembers he's not here to hide from Hannibal, he's here to tell him the truth about what goes on. Hannibal understands him and Eldon, and Will knows that Hannibal understands that people crave connection to others, and he knows what happens when a person is denied that for too long.

"I should've stuck to fixing boat motors in Louisiana," he murmurs, and his hand impulsively runs through his hair.

"A boat engine is a machine, a predictable problem, easy to solve. You fail, there's a paddle. Where was your paddle with Hobbs?" Lecter already knows the answer he'll get.

"You're supposed to be my paddle," he blurts, and he nearly tugs at his hair at how desperate that sounds.

Hannibal's face softens, "I am. It wasn't the act of killing Hobbs that got you down, was it? Did you really feel so bad because killing him felt so good?" This isn't going to go away, Hannibal isn't going to let him deny the truth forever. He already knows, and the only option is to just tell him, get it over with.

"I liked killing Hobbs," he whispers the words, and he feels like the weight he had been carrying around was suddenly lifted, now shared with Lecter.
There is a beat of silence, but before Will can feel uncomfortable, Hannibal speaks, "Killing must feel good to God too. He does it all the time. And are we not created in his image?" It strikes Will as strange, hearing Hannibal speaking of religion when he can't imagine the man worshiping any God at all.

"That depends who you ask."
"God's terrific. He dropped a church roof on thirty-four of his worshippers last Wednesday night in Texas, while they sang a hymn," and there's an undertone of disgust in his voice when he says it, and the look on his face is one that Will could swear he had seen on his face in the past. He remembered seeing that exact look on the other's face when the boys threw rocks at them. It's dangerous, but only last a split second before his face is neutral again.

He could have imagined it.
"And did God feel good about that?"
The innocence in the question has Hannibal speaking softly, as if they're sharing some deep secret together. Will asks him as if he knows personally just how God felt, if the deaths were caused at his hand at all. That kind of power he is already developing over Will's mind is something different and beautiful, the man already expects and trusts him to answer questions like that for him- to be the clarity of mind he's in need of, is a power he never imagined to be granted. "He felt powerful."

# Potage: Part One

The one thing Hannibal has seen that is always consistent about himself is that he needs control over everything in his life. That's why the way Will looks to him already for every answer, he nearly salivates. Will is quiet for a few moments after they discuss God, and Hannibal waits patiently for him to chew the conversation over, "I think God believes in putting people through tests their entire life, to see just how much they can handle."

Will has mentally moved on past talking about killing, well not specifically killing. There's many ways to die, little pieces of someone can be killed and reborn, modified. Now he's talking about the young Hannibal, and how many times pieces of him had to die because God wasn't paying attention enough to stop it. He stares at Hannibal intently when the man leans forward in his chair, shortening the distance between them. Will blinks and they're teenagers, and Lecter is closing the gap to kiss him.

"Perhaps, but would he ever give us more than we can handle? If it seems to be too great a struggle, isn't it entirely possible He is showing us just how quickly we can rise to the challenge?" Just like he once rose to the challenge of running away from the terrible environment he was in, and making it.

Hannibal thinks of Will, and where they will be in just a few months from this very moment. The variables could change, but the outcome should be just as he planned. Will will rise to the challenge he will present to him, *already* presented him with. The challenge of facing the truth about himself, the truth that Hannibal can see within him, the potential inside him.

"Some more than others," Will whispers, and he leans forward in his chair too so they're closer. Will can't tell for sure if Hannibal knows what he's thinking, or if he's thinking the same thing Will is without knowing it. A younger Hannibal sitting in the dirt alone, his face so swollen he can't see out of one eye.

"Depending on each individual; isn't it that he tests depending on someone's fate? He ensures everyone reaches their potential by shaping their experiences to help them get there," and Hannibal pictures Will bloody with someone else's blood, standing in Hannibal's kitchen. All because Hannibal ensured Will would realize that was what they were meant to do, that's why they met. Lecter would watch him carve the meat just like he taught, and they would eat together- far down the road. And Will would thank him for taking him away from this life he is stuck in, a life of solitude, loneliness, and constant unhappiness.

Will smiles at him slightly, and he pictures Hannibal in college; a quiet voice, sharp eyes, and a deep understanding of the human experience. Perhaps some nightmares and some fear, but he was growing and learning that his life was changed and he was meant for great things. Meant to help people because he understood.

"Your empathy is the tool you were given to help you reach your potential, Will. It allows you to experience things in such a way that leads you down a unique path," Hannibal

continues, and he wets his lips as Will quickly glances at his eyes and then sits back, away from him.

The moment is broken when the conversation is directed back onto him, and Will sits back and away from Hannibal. It's much easier seeing Hannibal's experience than his own, and he knows that's exactly what Hannibal is trying to tell him about himself. "Great potential; living my life alone with a pack of dogs while sharing my head space with everyone else." Hannibal cocks his head to the left and his mouth twitches down slightly, so quick Will almost didn't see it happen.

"I don't think even you've reached your potential yet, Will," he says quietly, and he almost can't control himself. Almost says that he sees his potential and plans to show him everything; almost tells him that when he doesn't have to be afraid because he will never have to be alone again.

Will inhales deeply and almost asks if what happened to Hannibal as a child helped shape him today, almost asks if he helped shape who is was today. Hannibal is staring at him intently and Will can't look away- it's Hannibal who looks away first by glancing at his watch. "It's just after eight, perhaps we could talk more over dinner? I could prepare us something," the invitation snaps Will's jaw shut and he swallows thickly.

Hannibal extends the invitation because this is the best conversation he'd had with anyone recently, and there's so much further for them to travel. They could cover a lot of ground tonight.

He wants to say yes, he wants to sit at the table with this man he just met but always knew and tell him how he only now believes in fate because they're sitting in the same room together again. If them being brought back together again isn't fate, he doesn't think there is such a thing. He wants to watch Hannibal prepare their meal, and then they could sit and talk about things other than work and Will's state of mind. Maybe Hannibal wouldn't be so formal anymore once he knew, maybe Will would even just kiss him after they ate. He blinks and he realizes he's been staring into Hannibal's eyes for nearly a minute, and he's thankful Hannibal doesn't find it odd when things like that happen.

"I have a long drive home, and I don't want to intrude. Thank you for seeing me on such short notice," and Will stands and adjusts his jacket. Hannibal bites his cheek and knows insisting wouldn't be conducive.

He bids Will a goodnight and gathers his things when he leaves, contemplating the scent of nostalgia and sadness that wafts to him at Will's departure.

Will drives home with white knuckles on the wheel, and wonders if Hannibal will tire of his strange interactions. By now the man is smart enough to realize that there has to be something else going on, beyond Will's usual social inabilities.
When he gets home he tends to the dogs and showers, then helps himself to two fingers of Whiskey while he sits on his bed in his boxers while Winston pushes his wet nose against his knee.

When he falls asleep he sweats through his shirt when he dreams of Hannibal drowning in the pond besides the swans, and sweats through the towel under him when he dreams of himself being held down against a desk, trapped in a self inducted silence.

Hannibal makes himself a meal, distracted by Will Graham and high on this new relationship he has no right to indulge in. The image of Will bloodied and wild has him inhaling the scent of his food deeply, eyes closed to picture it.

He snaps himself out of it to finish, because eating is an important ritual, cleans up and goes to shower. It's standing in front of the mirror right before he steps in that he catches the eye of his own reflection. They stare each other down before his eyes track down his narrow face to his neck and broad shoulders. He catalogs the scars and marks on his torso, something he hadn't bothered to do in years. He used to do it obsessively in college, stand before the mirror and touch each one and try to relive it until one day he couldn't remember. He stares at them now, running the pads of his fingers over the marks that have faded and changed shape as his body grew and changed.

There's no memories for him to reflect on, but a door in his mind rattles with skeletons and he dare not open it. People who had seen him shirtless over the years for whatever the reason never asked, and he was too busy inflicting his own wounds to others to worry about his own. Abigail Hobbs will have a beautiful scar and she'll never forget where she got it.

He touches the few marks on his hip and down into the dip of his groin and has one memory of being in his early twenties and looking at these particular marks and wondering if they'd in any way hinder him sexually. That same night he sought out a woman from his classes and they had sex in her room, and was pleased that everything worked properly.

That's why the human body fascinated him, because it could take so much and still function. It could lose so much and be injured to no end and still live, human's were built with so many safeguards that all but shut them off in the event of life or death- it knew to save energy for the important functions when under attack. Fight or flight even ensured it was naturally always ready for the worst. In time, it could heal and recover and it was beautiful.

He'd made it his life goal to find as many possible ways to beat he human body and brain.

He showers and decides last minute and on a whim to take himself in his hand, and he's hard in two strokes. He denies himself this small pleasure far too much, but when he does indulge, the abstinence makes the experience so much more pleasurable. When he cums, he doesn't think about why the image Will Graham covered in blood is what pushes him over the edge, but he moans into the steaming water of the shower.

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Hannibal wakes up to his phone ringing, but he still feels refreshed. He clears his throat once before sitting up and checking the ID, "Good morning, Alana."

"Morning, hope you slept well. I'm actually on my way to tell Will that Abigail Hobbs is awake," she says, and Hannibal smiles to himself. Abigail Hobbs will be interesting.

"I trust she is alright? Besides the obvious."
"She's fine, confused, but fine. I know you're anxious to talk to her, and I now Will will be too, but the two of you have to stay away for now," he grips the phone tightly and his mouth twitches in distaste, "Only because you were both there, and talking to a woman who was not there first might ease the transition from the world she remembers before being unconscious to the one she's in upon waking up, easier. You know all this, but I know it's hard."

She'd be right in any other case, but not with Abigail. He already knows she'll be more comfortable around a man, specifically him because he will ensure to isolate her trust in him alone. "You are right, Doctor Bloom."

"I know. But after I meet her, I will let you and Will know. When you both go can you just make sure Will doesn't way anything to upset her? We have to choose our words carefully," he frowns at that.

"Will has enough empathy to know what Abigail can and can not handle without me conducting their conversation, but I will ensure she is not upset in any way," it surprises him how naturally he jumps in on Will's behalf, and he's even more surprised by how personally he takes the mention of the other man's name.

Alana is silent for just a moment, "Okay, thanks. I just got to Will's, I'll be in touch," she says slowly, unsure.

"Thank you for the call, I'll see you soon," he concludes, and he's slightly uneasy that she's with Will without him. He hangs up and before he can even process his movements, he's dialing again.

"Good morning, Hannibal."

He switches gears quickly to partake in this conversation, putting into place what she knows of him and ensures she will know no more than he allows, "I hope I did not wake you, Doctor Du Maurier." He already knows he didn't.

"You did not, I'm just surprised to hear from you since you haven't asked for any appointments in the past few weeks."

"I apologize for that, a lot has happened recently. That's actually why I'm calling now, would you be available to see me in roughly an hour?" Of course she agrees, and when they disconnect, he gets up to shower again. It's been a habit, showering at night and in huge morning since his... Activities typically require it. He doesn't spend as much time in there as the night before, although the urge to is there. Instead he gets out and picks a suit and dresses in everything but the jacket before he goes downstairs to prepare himself breakfast.

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Will wakes up more tired than when he went to sleep, and it takes him a moment to realize its because the dogs are barking. He wonders if it's Hannibal while he tugs on a fresh shirt, but

when he steps out onto the porch and sees its Alana, he can't say he's disappointed.

He stares at her while she trugs up towards him, and he's standing there in no flimsy shirt and boxers and he realizes how that looks and that she's a woman and he has no respect for her by standing here like this. She doesn't seem to care, instead she smiles brightly at him, and the look nearly has her forgetting why he was embarrassed in the first place.

"Morning!" She calls, and the dogs continue to bark happily behind him, and he can't look away from her. She's here, at his house like it's the most normal thing in the world.

"Didn’t hear you drive up," he murmurs when she's close enough to hear him, and finally he takes his eyes off of her to look at the trees.
"Hybrid. Great car for stalking," she jokes, and he can't imagine who she'd use the quiet car to stalk, but he knows she certainly doesn't need a quiet car to come by and see him. It's interesting how no matter what's in his headspace before she comes around, she's the only thing that fills up his head.

"I’m compelled to go cover myself," he mutts weakly, and the confused part of him doesn't want to. She doesn't seem to look at him in anything but a professional, slightly friendly way, and he wonders why. Just another example that there's touch wrong with him.
"I have brothers," she says offhandedly, the statement stings. Brothers, here he is falling for her and she's comparing him to her brothers.
"Well, I’ll put a robe on just the same. You want a cup of coffee? And more immediately, why are you here?" It comes out more bitterly than he intends, but he turns to walk inside and he hears her following without hesitation. She's accustomed to him, the way he is doesn't bother her. He wonders if it's because she's a psychiatrist and that's what she does, understand minds even when they aren't normal but she doesn't pity him at least.

"Yes, and Abigail Hobbs woke up," she says quickly, and his eyebrows go up. Abigail Hobbs is awake, he'd been waiting for that to happen for nearly three weeks now. He'd been stagnating and chewing over work and guilt, but she was awake now and it was time to start moving forward again. Abigail needs him, well she needed somebody and he needed her.

"Well, you know how to bury the lead," and he's frustrated that she bothered saying anything else before telling him that. He's frustrated at everything, and he doesn't look at her when he turns to get his stuff together.

"You want me to get you a cup of coffee?"

"No. I want to get my coat," and he knows she's going to stop him, but he makes a move for it anyway.

She steps forward and grabs his arm lightly, and he freezes, "Let’s have a cup of coffee." She guides him to the kitchen and he sits in silence while she takes the authority of starting a pot of coffee. He wants to ask her why they're sitting here when the orphaned victim is awake and waiting to hear news from someone who knows what's happening in her life right now.
"Hannibal had the same reaction, you know. He was ready to hang up on me and go to the hospital too. But it wouldn't be good for Abigail, and that's who we have to think about right now."

"I've been thinking about her for weeks now, and now I can't go see her," he mumbles, rubbing his palm on the scruff on his cheek.

"I didn't say you can't see her, just not right now. She needs to talk to someone who wasn't there, Will. You and Hannibal are too emotionally attached to the situation and her to look at her with clear eyes. You know this," she chides, and he gets a scent of her perfume when she puts a mug in front of him and then he suddenly feels guilty for giving her a hard time.

His phone vibrates on the table and illuminates Jack's name, he reaches for it but she catches his hand and slides the phone just out of reach. She decides he can't see Abigail, decides he can't answer his phone, decides he's going to go see Hannibal and he finds it's strange he doesn't mind that she's been very involved in his life lately. Someone making his choices for him makes his life much easier.

It rings again a minute later and he scratches his face in frustration, "Is he gonna keep calling?"

"Jack wants you to go see her."

A difference of opinion between Jack and Alana, only she doesn't get yelled at for expressing it "And you don't."

"Eventually. Jack thinks Abigail was an accomplice to her father's crimes. I don't want to get in the middle of you and Jack, but if I can be helpful to you as a buffer–"
"I–I like you as a buffer," it comes out before he can think better of it, but he wants her to know how he feels about her, "I also like the fact that you rattle Jack. He respects you far too much to yell at you, no matter…how much he wants to." And he likes how she rattles him, and how even she has Hannibal agreeing to what she says. Thinking there's a chance that Abigail was involved makes his chest tighten.

"And I take advantage of that."

Theres so much he wants to say in response, but he feels guilty enjoying Alana's company while a girl sits alone waiting for answers, "Abigail Hobbs doesn't have anyone."

"You can't be her everyone. When I said what I was going to say in my head, it sounded really insulting, so I'm going to find another way to say it," she says quietly, as if he doesn't understand how bonding with someone works.

"Say it the insulting way," he doesn't mind her insults, in a sick way he likes them.

"Dogs keep a promise a person can't," one person is a dog's everyone, and they don't tire of them or wish for more. It's normal to be a dog's everyone, it's normal to want to be. He frowns at the table.

"I'm not collecting another stray," Abigail is a person he can understand, just like Hannibal. While people are young is when they are the easiest to connect with, young and broken.

"The first person Abigail talks to about what happened can’t be anyone who was there when it happened. So that means no Dr. Lecter either," and it makes sense even though he's not pleased about it, Alana knows what's nest.

"Yeah, much less the guy who killed dad," he will be the last person Abigail will want to see, "Jack’s wrong about Abigail." She's innocent and Jack's accusations will only turn her against the world more. Turn her away from him more if he's forced to investigate her.

He thinks Alana will agree with him right away that Abigail couldn't have been involved, but instead she smiles slightly, "Let me reach out to her in my own way." That's not what he wants to hear, but instead he nods jerkily.she doesn't give him time to come up with something else to say because she stands and puts her mug in the sink and comes to put her hand on his shoulder. He tenses without meaning too, and he knows she feels it without letting go, "You'll be my first call when it's time for you to go talk to her, I promise."

Then her hand is gone and she's heading back out the door, he doesn't even turn to say anything else even though he knows he should. He tries to hear her car leave, but sure enough the Hybrid is so quite he can't even be sure she left.

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Hannibal is sitting in the dimly lit room with Doctor Du Maurier across from him, and she sips coffee while he holds his by the ceramic handle. "Something must be on your mind, Hannibal. What has brought you here today?"

"I was thinking I would like to resume our scheduled weekly appointments. I've recently been introduced to some rather interesting people and been put in some interesting situations, and I feel sharing my experiences in a controlled environment will assist me in organizing my thoughts and feelings on the happenings," he clarifies smoothly, sipping the hot beverage from the cup.

"Well, we can do that. Would you care to explain?"

And he does. He informs her about Jack Crawford contacting him, and Alana Bloom suddenly reentering his life. He talks about Abigail Hobbs and Will Graham, skipping he sensation he felt when he saw Will covered in Abigail's blood. He focuses more on how she's now awake, and it's time to face the troubles that will come for her. Du Maurier watches him carefully, and he's cautious to show exactly what he should, "Abigail Hobbs is someone you connect with, is it because she's young or alone?"

"Both."

"Why her? Because you watched her life change forever?"

Because he will be given the power over her life, she will come to rely on him, "I understand how she will feel now."

She tilts her head at him, "You mentioned you were an orphan, do you feel the need to protect her from the ache that comes with that experience?"

He considers it, but his childhood is a black hole in his memory, all that remains are small snapshots and scars, "That is part of it, yes."

"Tell me more about Will Graham." It isn't a request.

He inhales deeply, "Will Graham is interesting, he's very different. He is able to view things in such a way that is unique to only him, and I'm fortunate enough to be his confident. He's very disturbed by orphaning Abigail."

"Have you and Will gotten close?"

He smiles slightly, "We haven't known each other very long, but yes. In a way we have grown rather trusting and friendly with each other. He has difficulty befriending people and interacting, but it seems to me he's taken to me well." He doesn't realize just how fondly he's speaking of the man, and how it leaks right into his tone. She's looking at him curiously, and he wonders exactly what she's gathering from the conversation, but she looks away.

"Why is Mr. Graham's trust so important to you?"

They both know it's very unlike him, but he's surprised he doesn't care that Will has gotten under his skin. She doesn't even know the half of it yet, "I'm not sure yet." He's telling the truth, but he can tell she doesn't believe him.

# Potage: Part Two

Chapter Summary

> Lets just say I was impatient and moved the 'reveal' up. I had it planned and now I was like "no I'm boring myself I know exactly where to put it." So I'd say like three more chapters, maybe four until we are there. Then it's all downhill, really.

Bedelia stares at him for what seems like forever after that, "I find it interesting; you've made your entire life around your solitude and suddenly you're here speaking fondly of a man you claim you only met recently. Abigail I can understand, but I'm not understanding your sudden connection with Will Graham."

He wets his lips and sips the coffee to pretend he needs a minute to gather his thoughts, "I feel Will may need me, more so than even Abigail. Abigail has everyone ready to be around her right now, I fear people have forgotten that Will also needs someone to be on the side of his best interests. His boss, Agent Jack Crawford seems to put him in situations he knows Will isn't mentally prepared for, but the risk is worth it. I think it takes a toll on him; isolates him further than he's already done to himself."

She raises her perfectly shaped eyebrows at him, "How many times have you been in Will Graham's company?"

"A handful," he says, and then he realizes how all of this will sound to her. Of course it'll sound strange, because she doesn't know, and she never can.

"Seems like an awful lot of consideration and information on a man you've only been around a handful of times, Hannibal. If Mr. Graham enjoys solitude, then you can't force yourself upon him. You're supposed to be his doctor, he has to come to you. At the end it's his choice if he wants to continue working for Jack Crawford, despite how you feel about it. That's what we do as psychiatrists, we can merely suggest a healthy and stable course of action, but our patients have the final decision," she says honestly, and he dips his head. He knows that, he knows it and he gets it. She doesn't understand that this isolation and his loyalty to Crawford is holding Will back from such greater things. He's hiding from himself. "Which is exactly what I'm going to do now, offer guidance. I think you should sever the budding relationship you have with Will," she says, and he raises his head to scrutinize her with cold eyes, "Let me finish. Will Graham is supposed to be your patient, and in all the years I've known you- you have never walked in here and spoke of one of your patients like you just have of him. I don't think you can keep a professional neutrality with him, for whatever the reason. Your interest in him is heading down a path of being unprofessional, even if it isn't there just yet."

He's aggravated that she'd jump so far with just a short conversation about Will, but from her point of view she's right, "Our relationship is professional."

She frowns, "Your actions are, your interest isn't. Your intentions aren't clear yet, but if you don't back away now, when they do become clear it may be too late to stop."

It's a fair warning, and he sniffs and brushes at the knee of his suit pants, "I'll keep it in mind."

"In mind but not in action," she sighs and stands, "I have some paperwork to attend to, let us pick up at your normal time later in the week." He's dismissed. That's why he likes her, appreciates her; he can't get under her skin. She doesn't let him close enough that she looses that professional neutrality with him, no matter how hard he's tried. He's often wondered if he could seduce her into an affair, just to raise the stakes and wrap her up in him further. She's the only person in his life that isn't engrossed in him enough to be blind to the truth, he must always tread lightly around her.

"Of course, I appreciate you seeing me on such short notice," he stands too and fixes his suit jacket.

"Tell Mr. Graham I say hello," he grins at that.

"Certainly, have a good day." He shows himself out, and he knows she doesn't let him do that to be rude. She does it to stress indifference, to underline the fact that they are colleagues and that he is her patient and not her friend.
He is just in his car when his phone vibrates, and he hopes it's Alana or better yet Will, and sighs when it's Jack.

"Hello, Agent Crawford."

"Doctor Lecter, Alana told me she informed you Abigail is conscious. She went there to speak to her this morning and is on her way to my office to tell me how it went, and I was wondering if you could come too. I'd like to hear your opinion," Crawford phrases it like a question, unlike how he'd demand it of Will.

Crawford already knows who's in charge of their working relationship, "I have free time- of course I'll come. I'll be there within the hour."

"I appreciate that, see you soon."

How exciting his life had become in the recent days, he thinks when he pulls away.

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Will feels hollow the whole morning. Being kept in the dark about whatever is happening with Abigail and waiting for any of them to get back to him is making the hours drag. He has a lecture at three and it's only just eleven in the morning. The dogs demand his attention so he rounds them up and throws on a jacket and takes a walk down through the field and towards the little creak just beyond the trees. The water is crystal clear and cool, he finds himself sitting beside it and dipping his fingers in it while the dogs jump right in. He doesn't even bother to try to stop them, instead he throws a nearby stick and they take off into the water

after it. The creak reminds him of a small pond he used to sit by, he wonders if Hannibal might make the connection if he were to bring him here.

Not that there ever would be a way to. The stoic man in a three piece suit would have no interest in sitting besides a creak in the mud like he did when he was much younger. How would he lure him here? He could call it therapy, he smiles to himself at the thought of them sitting in this very spot, talking about their childhood. Being young was so long ago and not long at all, it all jumbles together and doesn't make sense. His clearest and most fond memories of growing up were spent with a boy who grew up to be a man that doesn't remember him. The rest of his first eighteen years on this Earth were spent in solitude, following his father around for any second of attention he would get. He wanted to be good, so bad. More than anything in the world, he just wanted his father to appreciate anything he did. Will always caught big fish, his dad loved that. He also loved that Will would stand next to him for hours and hand him tools while he fixed boat motors.

He hated that his son would clam up in a conversation and awkwardly stare at the ground. He didn't like that his son never brought home a girlfriend for him to meet, or anyone home for that matter. He didn't like that Will didn't play football or baseball, and he hated most that Will would just sit and read for hours. He never told his parents that at school the boys picked on him relentlessly, he never told his dad he ate lunch in the bathroom just to avoid conflicts. When they'd ask how school was, he'd just nod and say fine. "Any girls catch your eye?" or "Ask one of the guys in your class to come on by, we can all fish."

Always "Yeah, I sit with her at lunch." and "Sure, I'll see if any of them want to." He never sat with anyone at lunch and none of them would ever fish with him. His father must have known but never called him out on his lies. Now he lives back in Louisiana and Will has called a few times when he feels his heart ache at the thought that he has no connection to his father. He'd pace the house some and upset the dogs, then dial and squeeze the phone while it rang. The first few conversations, his dad actually seemed interested in conversation, happy to talk to him.

Will was elated at that, but the conversations went right back into women and he never knew what to say, "Being an officer must have a lot of the women in town interested, anyone special in your life?"

He had stared at his dogs and wiped a hand down his face, *don't lie, tell him the truth. There's no one and he doesn't think there ever will be*. "Yeah, no one specific but I figured it's best to explore all my options," and he doesn't mean to say t but he knows it's exactly what his dad wants to hear.

Sure enough, he laughed, "Thatta boy, don't want to rush into anything."

Will called a few more times when he felt the most lonely, always careful to never call on a Friday or Saturday night because that's when people go out and have a good time. Usually on Sundays, he tried once a month but eventually his father started to pick up on the lies, "Hows your lady friends?"

"Alright," he'd answer just a second too late.

Silence was on the other line for a few seconds, "That's good."

He called less and less as the conversations became less and less communicative. When they had nearly sat on the line for a half hour in silence, he decided to stop calling. A small part of him wanted his father to call him instead, but his phone never rang with the call. Just as well, they had nothing to say to each other.

He thought of his mother and how she'd kiss him quickly on the head when his father wasn't around, he wouldn't like it because she shouldn't "coddle him". Sometimes he wanted so badly to curl up next to her and cry that he just couldn't keep going to school because he can't make friends and they pick on him and then he has to come home and lie about it. Instead he smiled at her and when she smiled back she looked sad, and he wonders now if she was mirroring the expression he had worn.

Hannibal understood all this, even if he didn't speak a word back then. He understood isolation and grief and bullies and lies, he was disappointed Hannibal moved on and he never could. He closes his eyes and inhales deeply, realizing his heart was beating way too fast and his eyes were blurry with tears.

If his father knew, they'd probably never speak again.

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Hannibal feels as if he has come to belong at Jack's office, the way he strolls right in and nods politely at the faces he'd seen on a few occasions now. If he wasn't above gloating, he'd grin at the notion that someone like him was welcomed into the inner circle of the FBI with opened arms. Alana is already seated across from Jack, and the second he walks in, Crawford immediately gives him his attention, "Thanks for coming, Doctor. Please sit." He hardly has taken his seat before Jack speaks again, and he swallows the aggravation at the rudeness, "I have 7 families waiting, let me rephrase, demanding that we find whatever's left of their daughters. Abigail Hobbs is the only person I can ask who might know the truth." Hannibal adjusts his suit jacket and crosses his legs, prepared to merely listen to the exchange. Abigail was certainly involved in someway with her father's crimes, he could see that just by looking at her but he was just as curious to know if Alana had been able to pick up on that fact.

"You can't ask her right now. We have to create a safe place for her first or you won't get any answers," Alana says, exasperated. They must have already gone over this before he arrived.

"I respect your sympathy for her, Doctor Bloom. One day I hope you'll appreciate my lack of it," Crawford fires back, then he turns to Hannibal; obviously his professional opinion will override Alana's as long as it fits Jack's agenda, that's why he was brought here, at least. Apparently, Crawford will bend to and accept anything as long as it fits what he needs it to.

"I have some appreciation," determined, she's determined to ensure that opinion is taken into account and followed by keeping Jack focused on her.

"Only body we found is the one Hobbs didn’t eat. 7 bodies. 7 girls," he says to Lecter, not looking at Alana again. Lecter finds it increasingly rude, his behavior. He makes note of it, stores it in his mind to select upon later.

"7 sisters, in Abigail’s mind. When she learns of her father’s crimes," he replies evenly. Alana is unaware of her involvement, therefor he will keep his suspicions to himself. Abigail and him will discuss it in the future.

"May already know about them. Her DNA’s all over his slaughterhouse," Crawford corrected, he doesn't care if Abigail did or didn't help her father, in his eyes it's clear cut. The girl doesn't stand a chance.

"You really think Abigail helped her father kill those girls?" Alana says angrily, she's appalled by the notion. Hannibal appreciates her standing her ground, firm in her beliefs that people are innocent until proven guilty.

"It is one possibility that needs to be ruled out. If she didn’t help her father, she may know who did," it's an argument she will never win, and Hannibal has tired of their banter.

"How was Abigail? When you saw her?"
"Surprisingly practical."

"Suspiciously practical?" No matter what they say, Jack will find something about it that fits his ideals. It sets Lecter's teeth on edge.

"I would suggest she can be practical without being a murderer," he says smoothly.

"I think she’s hiding something." He can't tolerate contradiction, and he wets his lips.

"It may simply be her trauma."

The more they talk, the more Hannibal sees Alana's side. He believes Abigail was in fact unconscious, and that Will and himself will be the ones that can reach her. Him especially, he can connect to her if he can just get these two to lay off and let him get close enough. Lucky for him, Jack wants Abigail Hobbs talking now and since Alana won't push her, he will send Will and him to talk to her now. "Graham is giving a lecture now, let's go get him," he says directly at Hannibal. Alana is fuming from being dismissed, and Lecter spares her a sympathetic look as if he disagreed with the final ruling.
He doesn't, it's exactly what he needs.
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Will starts the lecture with Hobbs, and plans on merging in with his copy cat, because what better way to educate than by what's currently going on now? Fresh and modern lectures seem to go over better. He'd heard numerous professors complain of inattentive classes, but when he gazes out at his classroom; everyone is watching him intently. He wonders why exactly that is, but he doesn't give it too much thought. Eyes on him was something he got used to over the years, he didn't mind lecturing in front of anyone.

It's only when he sees the near silhouettes of Jack and Hannibal standing in the doorway that he feels his hands get clammy. He continues on, forcing his eyes away from his therapist to look back at the image of the copy cat's victim. Hannibal looks from Will to the image on the screen and wets his lips. So very different, admiring his own work blown up and spoken about. In the brief time of his involvement with the FBI he had yet to grow accustomed to hearing his scenes discussed in his presence. It nearly made him giddy, if he wasn't above gloating; that the best minds sat with him and discussed ways to catch him. Asked for his help.

"Giving a lecture on the Copy Cat?" He didn't like the name, he wasn't copying anything. He created the scene like that to assist Will, but it was too risky to plant the idea that the name wasn't fitting.

"Need every mind we can get on this," Jack whispered back, and Hannibal would laugh at the thought of one of these trainees being the one that made the leap and discovered him, if it hadn't been a trainee that had nearly discovered him the first time. Mariam Lass… he glanced at Jack from the corner of his eye then back at the picture on the screen. The questions Will presents the class about the Copy Cat catch his attention, and he answers them one by one in his mind. How close dear Will is, he's so close that he's bringing himself further away. The way he speaks of the potential behind the Copy Cat murder is captivating, it's well planned and meticulous in a way Will rarely manages one on one. He's not even the slightest bit unsure of himself, which is interesting given the near three dozen eyes on him. Just another part of Will Graham that makes him such a complex individual.

"Brilliant," he murmurs to himself, as if WIll could hear him.

"He does give a wonderful presentation," Jack agrees, and Hannibal nearly rolls his eyes at his presence.
Will takes his time gathering his belongings, nervously pushing his glasses up his face before turning to face them. Lecter reads the anxiety in his posture easily, and he assumes the looming of Jack Crawford alone could cause that; with his addition Will must know something is coming.

"You and Doctor Lecter are going to visit Abigail Hobbs," Jack instructs as Will heads towards them.

Hannibal smiles at the shorter man slightly and nods, "Hello, Will. That was a very interesting lecture- well worded."
Jack huffs at the unrelated conversation, but Will smiles back, tight lipped and ducks his head, "Thanks, I didn't know you guys were coming." The praise makes heat rise in his face in a shameful way, Hannibal must think he's completely unable to socialize.

"Yes, very nice. Now, you can both go talk to Hobbs," and the friendly conversation is over and Will trails behind them until Jack parts ways with them, leaving them alone to walk towards his car.

"Jack Crawford could speak more kindly to you," Hannibal begins as soon as they are alone, and Will jams his hands in his pockets.

"That's just Jack's way, he wants things done yesterday," he mumbles in reply.

"I understand his tasks for you are time sensitive, but you're a grown man Will, not his puppet," Hannibal counters, and Will glances at him from the corner of his eye. He's defending him, it bothers him that people speak badly to him. The idea warms him, "I find it nearly unprofessional, the way he barks at you. It's rude and unnecessary."

Will swallows and unlocks the car doors for them, "Please don't mention that to him."

Hannibal looks up at him from over the top of the car and frowns, Will looks away, "I wouldn't unless you asked me to."

He doesn't say anything else, and they both climb into the car. Will's hands are moist when he turns the key and drives towards the road. Hannibal makes him nervous in a way he shouldn't be, and he supposes it's the unspoken truth between them. He's torn between thinking that Hannibal has every right to know, to remember. The conversation had many different outcomes, yet he couldn't seem to come up with one that felt more likely than the others. In fact, he couldn't grasp one outcome more than the other and complete a full thought about it. They were becoming friendly, Will trusted him and the chance of sharing the information could very well ruin that and their working relationship. He wondered what Hannibal would say to Jack when he told him he no longer wanted to work with him.

"Where have you gone, Will?" He snaps out of his thoughts and his eyes dart to the other man before focusing back on the road.

"I was just thinking."

"I could tell, would you like to talk about it? You looked unhappy," Hannibal asks innocently.

He inhales shakily, "Have you ever had something you knew, and you weren't sure if you should tell someone else?"

Hannibal smirked slightly and considered his entire life, "Yes, in a way."

"Did you wind up saying anything about it?"

"No, it wouldn't be conducive to me," Will wonders if he's talking about something from his childhood, then wonders if he remembers anything from those days at all. Denial and blocking out traumatic memories could be common from childhood- rape and abuse was something anyone would want to forget.

"Did you ever wonder if that was the wrong decision, never sharing?"

Hannibal sighs, the locked doors in his mind rattle and the darkened hallways leading to them creek, "Briefly, then I realized I wouldn't be the person I was today if I had."
Will swallowed, and silence passed between them. He knew Hannibal was waiting for further elaboration but he was silent until they arrived at the hospital.

"Let's go."

# Potage: Part Three

Chapter Summary

> If all goes as planned, three chapters until it's...time.
>
> And how about that premiere?! I demand you all write one fanfiction for the first episode, go! <3

Hannibal stores the strange conversation away and files it under the mystery that is Will Graham. Will holds his silence until he inhales sharply at the door, and when Hannibal peers in and sees Freddie Lounds, he can hardly contain the smile. Miss. Lounds wouldn't quit, he isn't even that surprised she's here now.
"Speak of the devil," the red head glares at Will with barely a glance at Hannibal. Will feels his face heat up and steals himself for the potential embarrassment this woman will put him through in front of a girl he's supposed to get to trust him and the man he thinks so highly of already.

He has no intentions of letting her know she'd gotten to him, he's gotten good at that throughout his life, "Would you excuse us please?" Hannibal was nearly ready to step in, but when Will speaks he's more than pleased to let him handle the situation.

"I'm not leaving you alone with her," it's a tactic to get Abigail not to trust him, as if he needs Freddie Lounds to help with that.

The orderlies take over from there, and Will decides it's best to pretend this didn't happen, "I'm Special Agent Will Graham."

"By Special Agent, he means not really an Agent. He didn't get past the screening process," she really doesn't give up, and now it's Hannibal's turn to talk to Abigail and she's interfering, "Too unstable."

Her rudeness is distasteful.
"I must insist you leave the room," he says smoothly, and they stare at each other for just a second before she looks a way.

Relentless as ever, she tries one last time to pass Abigail her card, " If you want to talk." The young girl looks from the card to the men in the room, and Will refuses to be seen as weak here. He snatches the card without thinking and rips it, and Hannibal feels pride swell in his chest. Apparently being stepped on is only permitted to Jack.

Freddie is gone then, and the silence falls over the room. Hannibal decides to stand back and let Will handle this, for the sake of observing the man. He's more than curious. "Abigail, this is Doctor Lecter..." He begins, "Do you remember us?"

The silence that follows the question feels like it drags on forever, "I remember you," she says finally, than her eyes harden and he looks away, "You killed my dad."

Hannibal watches Will's face fall, the three of them will have a very interesting relationship indeed.

He only speaks up and suggests a walk when it becomes obvious Will won't speak again on his own. He lets Abigail speak, interested in how what she says will give a way the truth that buzzes behind the situation. There's more going on here then she says, despite her account of the actions. Will is captivated, just as Hannibal knew he would be. The cut of seeing Lounds and Abigail's memory are quickly forgotten as they walk, and Will's empathy gets the better of him as the girl shares her traumatic memories. Will is too blinded by guilt and paternal instinct to even consider that Abigail shows just enough emotion to make it believable, but Hannibal isn't convinced. She knew, which doesn't make her less of a victim, but he's sure there's more.

Now isn't the time to speak to her about it. Will finds his voice again and comforts the girl as they sit, he reassures her. How easily someone so award falls into the roll of caregiver. He even coddles her and dismisses Hannibal's question about her knowing of the girls her father killed. Jack would be livid.

Will can't bear to think that they're adding to this girl's pain, looking at her now there's no way he saved a murder. She's a victim, she's young and she doesn't deserve this. "I’m going to be messed up, aren’t I? I’m worried about nightmares," she says shakily, and Will hovers near her.

"We’ll help you with the nightmares," he adds, and and Abigail looks up at him.

"I guess I'll have to get used to it," that statement gets Will.

"There’s no such thing as getting used to what you experienced. It bothers me a lot. I can only imagine how it bothers you when I see it over and over in my mind," he says quietly, and he thinks of just how many nightmares he'd had recently, of his past and his present blurring together to torture him, "I worry about nightmares, too."

Hannibal can't say he isn't surprised at the honesty in the statement, Will is desperate to connect with her. More desperate than he anticipated.

"Do you have nightmares about killing my dad?"

"Sometimes, it's hard to dream about much else," he whispers, and his eyes drop to the ground.

"That's how you know people don't just get used to living with something?"

He can feel Hannibal less than a foot away, and his shoulders hunch, "That, and because I still have nightmares about things that happened to me many years ago."

Will says it half to answer Abigail and half to make Hannibal wonder, subtle hints he hopes find a way in.

"Does killing someone even if you have to, feel that bad?" She asks innocently.

"Ugliest thing in the world," he murmurs.

Hannibal smiles behind both of their backs, his own two little liars.

"I want to go home," she says sadly. But there is no where for her to call home right now, all three of them know it. They take it that she'd had enough for today, and Will wishes they could stay and talk longer but instead he helps her stand and leads her back to her room in silence.

"We will see you soon," Will says to the floor as soon as she's settled.

"You'll come back? Both of you?" She looks at Will but her eyes land on Hannibal, Will frowns that she's more interested in him but nods even though she isn't looking.

Lecter smiles at her slightly, "Of course, soon."

She smiles back and Will leaves first. It's quiet while they walk towards the car, and Will even presses on when they can see the obvious red hair of Freddie Lounds near his car. Will straightens and Hannibal watches him from the corner of his eye. It's such a treat to get to observe Will.

Interesting how Freddie suddenly switches tactics, now she's polite. The woman's persistence is admirable, but it will also be her downfall one day. Will isn't interested, he doesn't take the bait of kindness and Freddie turns it right back into a threat.

"Miss Lounds, it’s not very smart to piss off a guy who thinks about killing people for a living," Hannibal nearly winces at his choice of words and can already imagine the title of the article that statement will produce. Freddie does too because she grins and with a flick of her hair, she turns and walks off.

Will is tense, he stands there and watches her go. Hannibal steps forward and places a hand on his shoulder. Will jumps and glances at the hand on his shoulder then at the man. "Sha'll we go?"

Will moves just to get the hand off his shoulder, it's much bigger than the last time it touched him, "Yeah."

Hannibal ponders Will's silence and tight grip on the wheel while Will wonders what he's going to do by about everything going on in his life. "Your car is at the office right?" He hates the way his voice shakes.

"Yes," then, "Would you like to have dinner with me? I will cook."

He wants to say yes, so badly. He imagines them sitting at Hannibal's table and connecting again like they once had. He wants to say yes, "I haven't seen my dogs all day," he replies and Hannibal nods.

"Of course, another time then."

"Yes, soon. Your breakfast was delicious I can't even imagine how great dinner will be," Hannibal smiles slightly, modestly. Will lets the sight warm him while he stares back at the road, then he frowns, "I shouldn't have said that to Lounds."

Hannibal chuckles at that, and Will realizes it's the first time he's ever laughed around him, "What's done is done, but I do believe there were...better choices than the words you used."

"Jack is going to be mad," and Hannibal peeks at him from the corner of his eye.

"That doesn't surprise me," Will's frown deepens and Hannibal sighs, "You won't have to face him alone, I'll be with you. Tomorrow."

Silence falls over the car and Will just breaths. Hannibal doesn't try to identify the undeniable urge to protect this man. "Thanks," Will finally says after the silence holds for several minutes, "And I feel like I owe you an apology."

Hannibal's eyebrows go up, "What would you have to apologize to me about?"

From the corner of his eye, he can see Will biting his lips and deciding on words to use, something he doesn't seem to consider often, "I know I'm hard to be around, hard to talk to. I just appreciate you... Always saying the right thing and having patience with me." It goes unsaid that people usually lack patience with him, no one gives him the time of day unless it's for something he can do for them.

"*Will*," he breathes, truly intrigued by this man, "I consider us friends, I don't consider you hard to handle or a burden. It never crossed my mind."

"I'm not used to being friends," Will admits, and from the corner of his eye he can see Will is blushing.

"Me neither," he adds smoothly.

They don't say anything else until they're back at the office, and Will drops him right to his car. "Thank you for driving me, I will see you tomorrow," he says, and he offers Will a smile.

"Goodnight," Will murmurs.

Will doesn't think until he's home, then he considers the warmth that's spreading inside him. He makes himself tend to the dogs and shower first before he slips into bed and acknowledge that he's been hard since half way through the drive home.

He jerks himself off because he has to, his body demands the attention. He closes his eyes and imagines Hannibal under him, squirming and coming apart when he bites his shoulder

roughly. Will comes with a cry all over his hand when he can practically feel Hannibal's fingers clutching helplessly at his sides while he pounds into him.

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Lecter gets home and heads straight for the wine cellar and the door beyond it. He's breathing heavily, because it's the anticipation. He takes the plastic suit from its hidden spot and selects his weapon and is back in the kitchen flipping through the recipes, then the business cards.

He thinks of Will when he kills that night, and that the need was strong because of him. He savors each cut, watching the rivers of blood pour from the carcass. He lets himself enjoy it, but just a little. He puts no emotion into killing, but he lets the strange joy of human connection slip into his work while he packages the meat.

After, he showers and wonders if he could get Will to see his potential, would he ever join him? It's way ahead of their current position, but he must plan for the desired outcome, he thinks when the blood runs off his body and down the drain.

Will dreams- they're young again and Hannibal is tucked into the corner, hidden behind the chair. He crawls towards him, peeking around the back. Hannibal's hands are buried in his hair tightly, his eyes squeezed closed. "It's okay," he soothes, and Hannibal opens his eyes they're red and burning. "Hannibal..." The boy lurches towards him and he's on his back.

Lecter bites his lip and his neck and grinds down on him roughly, "Slow down, Hannibal. It's okay," he tries to say comfortingly, but the other boy just digs his fingers into him deeper and devours his mouth. Will struggles back and they fight for dominance on the floor, and it ends with Hannibal pinned under him breathlessly. Hannibal's lip bleeds and Will licks at it and tugs at his hair.

Hannibal doesn't dream at all.

-

Sure enough, Jack calls them both nice and early and asks (demands) they come in. He doesn't mention the article, but Will they can both tell by the gravely tone of his voice that Freddie did in fact run the quote he said.

Hannibal can tell Jack is angry by the clipped tone, just as they expected. Hannibal smiles to himself and agrees to come to his office, and Jack hangs up without another word.

Despite different travel times, they both see the other in the parking lot. Irrationally, Will hopes his dream from last night isn't something Hannibal can pick up on, "Hey."

Hannibal wonders if he could convince Will to come eat with him tonight, to share his freshest meat with him, "Good morning, Will."

They're both surprised to see Alana sitting in one of the three chairs in front of Jack's desk while he scrolls on his computer. "Good morning, Alana," Hannibal greets and she smiles at him quickly, then at Will.

"Morning."

Jack doesn't waste time with pleasantries, and they both sit just as he looks up at Will, “It’s not very smart to piss off a guy who thinks about killing people for a living," he quotes, and Will looks down at the desk, "Know what else isn't very smart?"

Will holds his silence, and Hannibal crosses his legs just as Jack turns to face him, "You were there with him, and you let those words leave his mouth." Will is off the hook at least, and Hannibal stares back at him neutrally. He isn't intimidated.

"I trust Will to speak for himself," Will feels like a child, and he glances at Alana to see she's looking at him sympathetically.

"Evidently, you shouldn't," he hisses, and the two men stare at each other. Will looks at the cold glare in Hannibal's dark eyes and remember a that exact same look from years ago... Emotionless and hard.

"I'm just glad the article wasn't about Abigail Hobbs," Alana jumps in and breaks the silence. All three men turn to look at her, and she smiles slightly.

Will can't help the unprofessional thought that she's beautiful.

Wills comment is forgotten, and Abigail is the new topic of conversation. Alana defends the girl while Jack wants to push. Jack always wants to push.

When Jack brings up the Copy Cat, Hannibal is quick to jump in and inquire further. Will is forgotten, as if he isn't there at all. No one asks for his opinion or even glances at him. It's for the better, he'd rather listen.

"We have no idea what's waiting for her when she gets home," Alana insists, but Jack isn't hearing it.

"I need her to go back, and I want all three of you to go with her. Today."

There is no room for further discussion.

"I will drive us to get Abigail," Hannibal finally says, and Alana sighs in frustration.

"Thank you, Doctor," Jack dismisses them by turning back to his computer, and they all stand to go.

"I'll arrange a flight for the four of you to Minnesota, I'll send the details to Will."

# Potage: Part Four

Jack's demands leave them in silence until they're at their cars, "We need some clothes to bring, so we can meet at Hannibal's and go from there- it's closer."

Lecter nods in agreement and eyes Will as the man rubs at his face and nods too. In their separate cars, Hannibal wonders what a few days straight with Will will bring. The trip should prove interesting, or at least informative. He'd like to get a sense of where Abigail's mind is so he can best know how to reach the girl and bond with her. She will be useful, he will find a way to make it work for him.

Will gets home and stares into his closet and pulls out whatever it is he grabs, all flannel and old jeans. He imagines Hannibal folding three piece suits into very expensive luggage.

His phone vibrates in his pocket, and there is nothing more disheartening then when Jack's name pops up on his phone, "Hello."

"I got you guys a flight from the airport in Maryland, four o'clock. I booked you guys rooms at a motel not far from the Hobbs residence. Rental will be at the airport. I'll stop in and feed your dogs for you." It's nearly noon. He isn't offering to take care of the dogs, he's informing. The thought of Jack in his house makes him more uneasy.

"Thanks."

The drive to Hannibal's seems too short, it doesn't give him enough time to get a grip on his emotions. He's nervous, spending the weekend with the woman he may or may not have obvious feelings for, the man that invades his dreams and memories, and the girl he orphaned is terribly overwhelming. Alana is already there when he arrives; Hannibal is putting their two bags in his trunk. He awkwardly shoves his bag in the back and climbs in.

Hannibal and Alana exchange a look Will doesn't see.

Alana and Hannibal speak quietly to each other about nothing of much importance on their ride to the hospital while Will stares out the window of the back seat. He wonders about Abigail and if they can really help her, or if it's already too late. Jack has it out for her, he wants her to be involved because that means he's been right all along. He was there, he saw her, and it can't be true... Can it?

He doesn't admit to himself that somewhere in the back of his mind, he thinks they may be playing right into a game.

Hannibal wonders idly what this trip back to the Hobbs residence will uncover. For Will the Abigail, even Alana, he's interested to see what will transpire. The silence from the back seat for the entire drive tells him that Will is deeply lost in thought he imagines the other man is thinking about Abigail's well being naturally.

Lecter wonders if the girl can keep her stories straight enough to keep Will and Alana on her side.

When they pull up to the hospital, Alana deals with signing her out while Hannibal slips away to meet her at her room. W ll follows closely behind but never emerges from behind him, even after he'd knocked once on the open door. There is no door, at all, yet he knocks anyway. Abigail is perched on her bed with a book, and when she looks up at him- she positively beams.

"Hi Doctor Lecter."

He smiles back at her and takes a step in, "Good morning, I hope you're feeling alright." His eyes don't linger on the nearly healed gash in her neck. It's uncovered to breathe since it's no longer an opened wound.

She looks around him to where Will remains in the doorway, "Hey, Will. What are you guys doing here?" Unlike Hannibal, Will can't look away from the mark until she uncomfortably raises her hand to her neck before reaching for her scarf to wrap it around her neck.

He hesitates to give Will the chance to answer, but all he does is wave in her direction, "You said you wanted to go home, so we are going to take you there. Doctor Bloom is downstairs arranging it."

"The three of you are coming with me to Minnesota?"

Will nods, "Yeah, maybe going home will help you make sense of everything, or even help you remember."

She doesn't question them more than that, and she stands to get her jacket. "How long are we staying?"

"I'd assume a few days, it's Friday so Will has no classes and Doctor Bloom and I have no patients. Can you fit the trip into your schedule?" Hannibal smiles slightly at her and she grins back, Will glances at Hannibal's profile and feels the trust he's going to establish with the girl. Teenagers relate better to friends than to authority figures, treat them as an equal and you'll get somewhere. He refuses to call it jealousy he feels over her taking to him already.

"I did have an exciting weekend planned, but I guess I can fit it in," her hands slip into her jacket pockets and she glances up at Lecter, "I don't want to see anyone from my town."

"We will try to avoid it, I'll stay with you either way. We will handle it if needed," It doesn't elude that he says 'I'll stay' and not 'we'. He frowns to himself slightly when they come up to Alana.

"Hi, Doctor Bloom," the smile on her face isn't entirely genuine.

"Hi Abigail, the nurses are just getting some of your stuff together. Did you like the clothes I got you?" Apparently he's the only one not bonding with the girl; he feels awkward picturing himself trying to bond with her. Maybe he'd offer to take her fishing somewhere. The thought

is fleeting, young girls don't like the mud and the water. He imagines the two of them standing in the currents, water flowing past them while Hannibal stands on the bank and watches them. The stag...

"Ready, Will?" He snaps out of it and stares at the three sets of eyes on him, Alana is concerned, Hannibal looks intrigued, and Abigail looks at him like he's not human.

Maybe he's not.

"Can is sit in the front?" Abigail asks directly to Hannibal, Alana and Will trail behind in the parking lot.

"I don't see why not," and he takes her bag from her politely and even opens her door for her. She positively beams, Alana seems to appreciate Hannibal's actions and he feels his stomach twist uncomfortably for no good reason.

He's pleased the ride is relatively short, it spares him from trying to find a place to jump in on the conversation while the other three talk. Abigail tells Hannibal about her graduation from high school nearly a year ago; how relatively *normal* her life had been up until just recently. By extension, Alana includes herself in the chat. It's irrelevant to all the recent events, but seemingly so important to the budding relationships in the car. And he can't come up with one thing to say.

"Did you like it?" He finally says, and she looks over the seat at him, "School, did you like it?" He clarifies.

"Actually, yeah. I did pretty good too," he nods and looks away from her, the contribution to the conversation over.

"That's good, getting into college won't be difficult for you," Alana adds, and Abigail just nods silently.

When they get there, he's glad Jack called ahead and hammer everything out. A few flashes of his temporary badge and they're sitting on the plane. Abigail didn't hesitate to take the seat right next to Lecter, and he flushes when Alana casually takes the seat next to him.

He listens to the conversation in front of him, it's moved onto books. He envies the ease Hannibal has with communicating, especially to Abigail. She's already picked him, which makes him more uncomfortable. He's sure they will talk about him in the future.

"Do you think this is a good idea?" Alana questions, and he isn't sure if she's just asking to make conversation or if his opinion means anything.

"It could go either way, I just wonder what will come from us going their."

He's thankful she doesn't say anything after that' but instead takes out the book she had been reading to Abigail in the hospital. He dozes off to the disturbing memory of his dream during her visit

Hannibal.

What is wrong with him that he'd even be able to conjure up the false memories of abusing a child. He remembers fitting his fingers into the hand shaped marks that used to cover the pale skin.

His dreams wander to the present and he strips Lecter of his suit, a far cry from the orphanage issued uniforms. There's no bruises now but he can still see them, still feel that the skin is warmer where they used to be. Scars, there had to be some scars. He wonders if any are as bad as the one on Abigail's neck. Matching wounds, battle scars from traumatic memories. Hannibal can relate to her because he grew from the experience, Will can't learn from the past and use it now.

A much younger boy, angry at the world for mistreating him. Watchers beating him relentlessly, crushing Hannibal into the ground after he squirms fearfully in his bed. His mind wanders further, to made up memories of Charles holding Hannibal's struggling body under the water of their pond, only he doesn't let him drown. He's yanked up just as his fighting weakens; sputtering bloodied water and mucus from his mouth and nose. His eyes are big; wide and scared and they bore into his own just before he is thrust back under the water. His thrashing sends the disturbance of the water towards the swans and they fly from the water...

"Will?" He wakes up with a sharp gasp and opens his eyes to see Abigail looking over the back of her seat at him confused, Alana has her hand on his arm and she looks worried. Hannibal peers at him from between the seats, his face neutral. He is the picture of calm, the exact opposite of the Hannibal in his dreams.

"You were having a nightmare," Alana informs him, and he rubs his eyes. "We are almost there anyway, put your belt on."

Abigail glances at him one final time before turning to sit right again. She does her seatbelt when Hannibal does his, "Is something wrong with Will?" She whispers to him.

"I'm not exactly certain what he sees, but he's haunted by his memories."

She's silent then, and none of them speak until they're landed and in the rental car, "It's late, we should check in the motel for the night and start tomorrow," Alana breaks into their silence.

"I agree," Lecter nods and drives for the motel Jack sent to Will's phone. He's interested in Will's bad dreams, he wishes the man would tell him without him having to drag the information from him.

"Can we eat?" Abigail pipes in, "I'm hungry, that hospital food was gross."

"I could use something to eat myself," Alana adds hesitantly. Hannibal crinkles his nose at the thought of eating anything they could suggest. Wills stomach turns at the thought of consuming anything right now.

"There's a diner right down the road from the motel," Abigail supplies happily, "I went there with my mom before we went on a trip."

He pulls into the parking lot without waiting for them to say anything else. Their meal is relatively quiet, and he sticks to a salad and water while Will nurses a cup of coffee and fries. The greasy smell of Abigail's cheeseburger repulses him and he keeps his eyes in his greenery while Abigail and Alana talk about the gifts Alana brought her when she woke up.

Will looks at Hannibal across the table from him, wishing they were alone so they could talk. The need to get the truth off his chest is maddening, despite the repercussions of the revelation. "Not feeling very hungry, Will?"

Graham flushes when he realizes he'd been staring and looks down at the fries he unsuccessfully picked at. "Coming from the man eating a salad." He smiles to himself at the image of the very clean Hannibal devouring a diner burger.

"Far more nutritious than those oily, overcooked slivers of potato and burnt coffee," the older man fires back evenly, and Will full on grins.

"Would you like one?"

Hannibal huffs a laugh and Will chances a peek up at him, just in time to catch a rare small smile, "I'll have to decline, thank you."

When they finish, Hannibal leaves a fifty for their bill before anyone can even get their wallet out and waves off any words if protest. Hannibal takes his bag and Abigail's when they walk from the car to their motel, and Will takes the hint and awkwardly carries Alana's to her room for her. He stands there while she gets the door opens, and wonders if he was someone else, would she invite him inside. Instead, she smiles at him before going in, leaving him to take his own bag to his room.

Hannibal brings Abigail's belonging into her room, letting his eyes linger on the mark on her neck when she unwinds the scarf. "Thank you for coming with us, I know you don't have to," she says when she sits on the bed and looks out the window, "I can't believe last time I was in Minnesota my whole life... Was destroyed."

"Not destroyed, Abigail. Just changed, forever."

She looks up at him with light, uncertain eyes, "Do you think I'll ever be normal again?"

He sighs and sits besides her on the stiff mattress, "With time and effort, yes. People overcome circumstances beyond the expected all the time."

She stares at him for a moment longer before getting up to open her bag, "Maybe I'm not one of those people," them she adds, "At least the orderlies thought to pack some of my books so I have something to do tonight,"

"I highly disagree with that, together we can ensure you're one of them," he stands and takes a few steps for the door and turns when he hears her feet on the carpet, just in time to watch her raise her arms and fold them around his middle. Surprised, he only briefly hesitates before returning the gesture, his own arms folding around the tops of her shoulders. He

inhales deeply and memorized the smell of the standard hospital hair products and soap mingling with the smell of her youth and secrets.

Just as quickly, she steps back, "Sorry, I just...thank you."

He smiles at her gently, "Of course, anything you need you need to only ask me. I will do everything in my power to help you."

It hangs in the air that he of all people is more powerful than most; that he is willing to break rules and bend truths to help. "I know, goodnight Doctor Lecter."

"Sweet dreams, Abigail. You can come get me if you have a nightmare," and he leaves, proud of himself for how quickly he bonded her to him. Substantial progress. He goes to his own room and unpacks his suit, happy to see they haven't wrinkled much, and hangs them in the closet and heads for a shower. No worse feeling than the smell and feeling of other people on your skin after traveling.

-

Will has to lay down to keep himself from getting up and finding himself at Hannibal's room. He's tired despite the nap on the plane, but then again he's always tired. He thinks he will always be tired, and Hannibal Will haunting until he tells the man the truth. It'll probably keep haunting him after.

It haunts him again, when he closes his eyes.

He's younger now, maybe nine or ten. He's shaking painfully under a flimsy cover, because he's so *cold*. His teeth clatter together dramatically and he shoves his fingers in his mouth to stop the noise because it sounds so loud in the otherwise silent room. He laps desperately at his chapped mouth, and his lips are so dry they crack and bleed onto his fingers. His stomach rumbles from too many stolen meals, older boys taking his food because he just throws it up anyway. A watcher makes his rounds, and he bites harder on his fingers and clenches his eyes shut. He has to be asleep, and he tries so hard but his distressed breathing gives him away.

The footfalls stop just at the foot of his bed, and he tenses and holds his breath. An eternity later,they start again and the man is gone. Bile crawls up his throat and he swallows repeatedly to keep it down. Morning can't come soon enough.

He wakes up with tears in his eyes and sits up. Frustrated tears leak down his face and he buries his face in his hands.

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